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# PCZ

ISSUE 173 NOVEMBER



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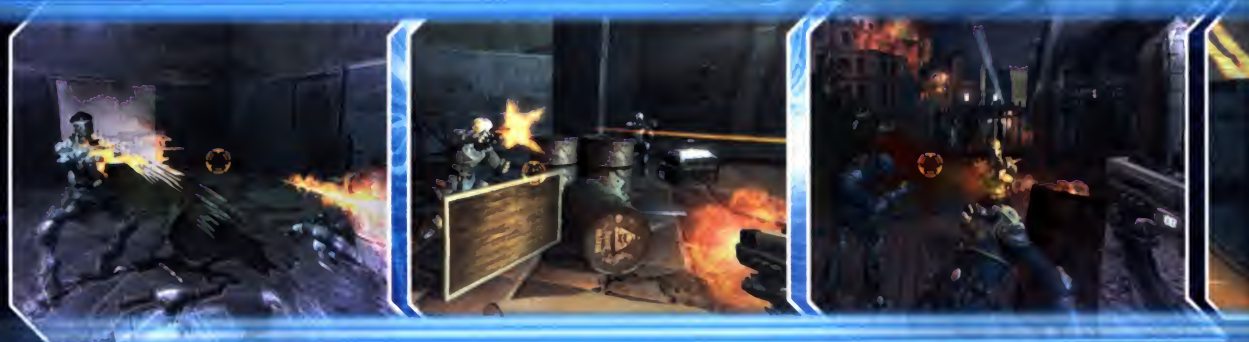
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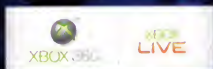
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BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

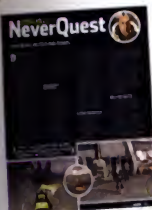
# PCZONE

## COVER STORY

56

# TEAM FORTRESS 2

Get ready for the explosive return of the most manic team-shooter around



## NEVERQUEST 135

"Our numbers are decimated further when Anger has to go, presumably called by his mum"



## LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY 62

WE DECIDE WE REALLY LOVE LEGO, EVEN IF THOSE SEMI-POSEABLE ARMS CANNOT HUG

## WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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Too busy? PC ZONE in 61 words... Will flies away to Seattle to see Valve, reveals lots of exciting things about their current projects, narrowly avoids the massive airline disruption but has his camera broken by BA. Not the guy from the A-Team though, the ones who fly planes, which is ironic because the other BA hates planes. Then Jamie... Oh, are we out of space already? Damn.



## SHOW SHAME

**GUTEN TAG. YES,** I've just got back from the Leipzig Games Convention, and no, I'm not going to go down the route of talking about thigh-slapping, leather-clad Germans and large bratwursts (although the sausages were rather good).

What's got me fired up is the fact that a friendly, functional (ie a bit dull) German town can host a cracking videogames show that puts the UK to shame. As a punter, you pay your entry fee of 10 Euros (about £7) and subsequently play (yes – PLAY!) multiplayer *Crysis*, *WOW: The Burning Crusade* and dozens of other incredible PC titles, as well as grabbing armfuls of T-shirts and other game-related tat, and gawping at innumerable toothy European booth babes.

With the death of E3, I feel the industry is now seriously lacking some razzmatazz – OK, the yearly LA show was bloated and often a pain in the arse to cover as a journalist (in between trips to Playboy Mansion), but you can't tell me that a sterile series of hotel meeting rooms full of Excel presentations is going to create the same excited buzz? Even more of a scandal – up there with the new Wembley – is the fact that the UK games industry can't get its act together and put on a decent event like the old ECTS at London's Olympia. The words 'piss', 'up' and 'brewery' spring to mind. Roll on Leipzig GC 2007...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor



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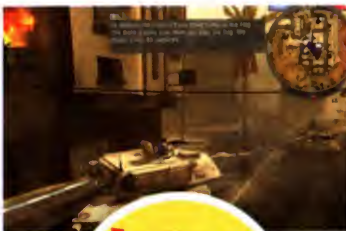
PLAY.COM



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Who killed E3?

AMAZING GAME COMPO! 116

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New kid on the block

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Whip crack-whip to hell

**THE BEST OF THE REST**

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112 FREEPLAY  
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**"CALL OF JUAREZ WILL SCALP THE REST"**

- PC Gamer

**"CALL OF JUAREZ IS A STUNNING GAME"**

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UPFRONT



# MEET THE TEAM

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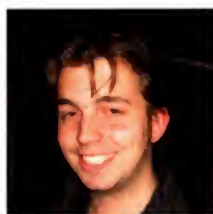
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## WILL PORTER

Arms and Heart

AGE: 26

LIKES: A nice packed lunch

DISLIKES: Jelly Babies

FANCIES: Himself, in a fight

FAVOURITE GAME: *Half-Life*

PLAYING NOW:

*Team Fortress Classic*

Party-hard Porter came straight to work from the V Festival this week. Manly with dirt, wily Will knew that our offices have showering facilities. Spotting someone else just as sweaty as he was, he followed him into the showering room. After exchanging basic and acceptable bathroom banter, Will nipped into a cubicle, got proper soapy and towelled himself off. (Easy girls, he's taken.) Then realised that you need a pass to get out of the bathroom, and had to wait for a soggy naked man to let him out. Will says this happens to him every, single, day.



## JON 'LOG' BLYTH

Right Leg

Log is currently gobsmacked that his book got £68 in Tat Zone. That's more than he's picked up in royalties, and it goes to a so-called "good cause". He might register himself as a charity now.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:

*Evil Genius*



## DAN GRILIOPOULOS

Brain

Trying to make an anagram out of Dan's name is as obvious as saying "That's Sod's law, that is" and "Jesus, you're tall", but it's part of human instinct. Our best effort is 'Ola, Nudi Girl's Poo'.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:

*Heroes Of Annihilated Empires*



## SUZY WALLACE

Torso

Suzy's name is a spoonerism of 'Woozy Solace', giving the impression that she spends her spare time on her own with a bottle of whisky. But Suzy doesn't drink alcohol, so she nurses a Friji instead.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:

*GTR2*



## DALE PRATLEY

Eyes

The Elizabethans believed in four elemental, bodily humours; sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic. Dale believes in cyan, magenta, yellow and black, and is their god.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:

*Adobe Tennis*



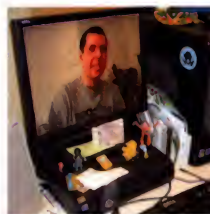
## STEVE HOGARTY

Left Leg

Yep, Steve's been evicted again. When asked how he manages to get landlords to evict him so quickly, he confides: "A combination of withholding my rent, and threatening his family..."

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:

*LEGO Star Wars II*



## JAMIE SEFTON

Sentient Electric Cloud

As editor, Jamie Sefton's special power is to gather up our disparate limbs and meld us into a warrior prince who will crush the enemies of freedom. While the other hand scratches our nuts.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:

*Counter-Strike: Source, Prey*

STUFF THAT HAS HELPED US THIS MONTH... Moving away from noisy bastard neighbours and next to a nice old couple  
STUFF THAT'S HASN'T HELPED US THIS MONTH... Relentless, thundering organ music coming from nice - but deaf - new neighbours

## STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

MMO SUBSCRIPTION FEES 52 Mins £27 a month? It's not a mobile phone, for god's sake

IT'S NOT ACTUALLY A DONGLE 20 Mins But dongle is funnier than Flash Pen Drive

THE 'OLD FAITHFUL' VIZ TINGLE 3 Mins The odd Spider sense that tells Will when a new copy of Viz is in Smith's. You could set your watch by it

COSPLAY FANCY-DRESS PARTIES 306 Mins And the difficulty of finding tartan skirts at the last minute

ORGAN MUSIC 48 Mins But what kind of organ is it? Wuritzer? Bontempi? Hammond?

WHAT'S THAT COMING OVER THE HILL? IS IT A MONSTER? 54 Mins The best music lyric screenshot caption of all time?

FARFAR FALCON 4 PATCHES? 42 Mins You're having a laugh, aren't you?

TEACH YOURSELF PROGRAMMING 46 Mins PHP, C++, Action Script - we're all at it, so we are

MR BENN 34 Mins Which way does Mr Benn walk at the beginning of the programme?

LOG'S CAT 50 Mins Slept on his face and made him ill

## WIN!

Don't pity the tiny compo, and don't lavish it with patronising compliments. It's a proud creature, and will nip at your fingers. Treat it well, however, and it will lavish you with gifts; simply tell our Tiny Compo the answer to the question on the front page, and send it to Tiny Compo (173), PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Tiny Compo 171 goes to Paul Gadden, who knew that *Dark Messiah* is set in the *Might & Magic* universe. Not Ashan. Fooled you? Stupid professional comper.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!





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# LETTERS

Send *Jamie Sefton* a letter, the sooner the better...



## PC ZONE FIGHT!

I was just lying on the beach reading about your latest Fight Club when a pointless yet compelling question struck me. Which *PC ZONE* staff member is the best gamer? Worryingly, all thought of bikinis and surf dissipated as I began to design a series of challenges to eliminate the weak and raise the powerful to all-new levels of fame and glory. After dismissing a *Star Trek*-esque circle of death scenario, I settled for a tournament, including a range of games, to find out which staff member really is the shizzle. For instance, who can survive the attacks of an enraged *Oblivion* unicorn the longest, who can drive around *San Andreas* the fastest, or who



can pee furthest – all meaningful tests of skill and character. Perhaps Will and Steve's extensive tea-making experience will have provided them with the manual dexterity to annihilate the opposition? Or maybe Martin Korda's Eastern European bear-wrestling skills will steal the show? It must be time for us readers to finally discover who is the best of the *PC ZONE*, ahem, elite.

Sam Cheney

Congratulations! You win a prize of a free game and a job replacing the sacked art staff on *PC ZONE*!

## CHOOOOOONS

Why has no-one created reactive music yet? For example, when you're playing a first-person shooter and the music is quiet and moody, then suddenly, when you spot an enemy up ahead, the music could become more exciting and upbeat. You go in fighting and the music cranks up a notch, you deliver death to all the enemies around you, and then the music drops down to a build-up. I know there are already games with trigger points in them, that start off a different track for certain sections, but I'm talking about music that matches your actions on-screen and blends seamlessly to the next part of the song. It seems so obvious, yet I can't think of any games that do this. Stuart Ashton

Actually Stuart, there are a few forthcoming games that will have this technology, namely *Scarface: The World Is Yours* and *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*. Each game has multiple instrument tracks that fade in and out depending on the action

## Letter of the month

### Talking bollocks

Sitting uncomfortably alongside *Oblivion*'s many achievements lies one unfortunately inescapable flaw: the dialogue. At best it's flat and unintentionally funny; the rest of the time it's simply embarrassing. Bruce Nesmith's proud claim in issue 171 that "the design staff wrote 100% of the dialogue" highlights the culprit: being a good level designer doesn't make you an expert at wordsmithery. Games have attracted top artists, coders, musicians, animators – so where are all the writers? Hopefully with games placing increasing emphasis on story and character, developers will employ talented writers and not just hire crap Hollywood scribes, *Pariah*-style. Simon Jones

Good point, Simon. I picked up on this last month in my editor's letter, when I mentioned that I feel character and script often play second fiddle to mind-blowing graphics. Memorable games are the ones we react to emotionally – *Deus Ex*, *Half-Life 2*, *Sam & Max: Hit The Road*, *Monkey Island* – and that's because they have well-written and believable dialogue. You've earned your graphics card, sir.

Great idea Sam, but the problem is we're all good at different games. I'm a champion at *Pro Evo 5* (office and official tournaments), Will is a shooter fanatic (*Half-Life 2*) and Steve is excellent at finding and playing free stuff (*Golf?* being a regular favourite). Meanwhile, Suzy kills at racers such as *GTR2* and old-school beat 'em ups such as *Street Fighter II*, and Log can destroy anyone at *Horace Goes Skiing* on the ZX Spectrum. However, the best overall gamer will always be Korda, because he tends to pull out your spine if you beat him.

## PIRATE COPY

Just saw in issue 172 on pages 78 and 79 that *Pirates Of The Caribbean: The Legend Of Jack Sparrow* and *Age Of Pirates: Caribbean Tales* have the same lead screenshots. Are they coincidentally exactly the same games, are you taking the mickey or is this an error?

Mark Ibson

Well done Mark! You've spotted the deliberate mistake.



WIN!



ONE OF THESE!

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a superb Connect3D X1600 Pro 512MB!



## SAY WHAT?

### "Indie developers are not evil profit-driven companies, they're small teams striving to get their dreams out"

Artistides Mytaras takes umbrage with Martin Korda

on-screen for a 'live' interactive soundtrack. I hope it won't be long before we hear atmospheric FPSs with reactive music, rather than sub-Nine Inch Nails rubbish.

#### BLARNEY BARNEY

Why are PC games in Ireland so bloody expensive? 55 Euros (£37) for one game? Rip-off! I'm a 13-year-old gamer and therefore have little money to spend. I've also noticed that the price of my favourite PC magazine is rising, slowly but surely – it's now up to 10.33 Euros (£7) – and it's even more expensive in the city. I place the blame squarely on space monkeys (George Bush and Tony Blair?) as usual.  
Dexter Breathnach

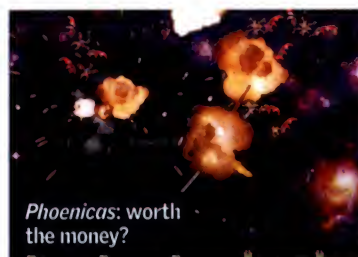
Obviously seven pounds is STILL a bargain for PC ZONE, but 37 quid for a game? Blimey. Why not use the t'Internet and hunt down the best price online? Don't forget we also have an entire section – Freeplay – which gives you days, weeks and years of fun for no money. Alternatively, if you're a good enough writer, I recommend 'doing a Hogarty' and leaving Ireland to get

a job on ZONE, where free games flow like running water...

#### INDIE ANGER

Martin Korda has indeed uncovered the true reason I made *Phoenicas* (Indie Zone issue 170). It wasn't to create a non-stop high-scoring-oriented action-shooter, it was to rob people of their money by selling them a sub-par product. Indie developers are generally not evil profit-driven companies, they're mostly small teams that strive to get their dreams out there and try to make it happen. Martin Korda should keep that in mind when reviewing indie games and show a bit more respect.  
Aristides Mytaras

We're very supportive of the indie gaming community, but at the end of the day, we do have to compare the titles to commercially-released games. Your shoot 'em up *Phoenicas*, for example, costs \$19.95 (£11), for which you could now alternatively buy *SiN: Episodes*, *Half-Life 2: Episode One*, *Far Cry*, *Medieval: Total War* or a heap of other AAA titles. Do we just review



*Phoenicas*: worth the money?

your game in isolation, giving you special (and I would say patronising) treatment as an indie developer? I think we have the balance just right, but if you disagree, send your opinions to the ZONE address.

#### CAN THE CAN

Can I just say – issue 172, page 92, bottom of the page – pffffffttttttttt! A can of Blow Off! LOL!  
Tim H

Yes, we laughed at that too Tim. Here's a reprint in case you missed it. Please also send your amusing photos of yourself standing next to rude place names or potatoes that look like cocks to the usual ZONE address.



What settings would you like to see in future LEGO games? One which comes to mind is *LEGO A-Team!* Hannibal, BA, Face and Murdoch, building bizarre tanks from discarded piles of LEGO!

bagsabbis

*LEGO Cannibal Holocaust*, *LEGO House Of 1,000 Corpses*, *LEGO Scarface*, *LEGO Pet Cemetery*...

ICE MAN

*LEGO Giant Monsters*, with giant LEGO Kongs, Godzillas and dinos breaking LEGO cities into their component pieces against the clock. *LEGO Big Brother* would be appropriate too, as you have to be thick as a brick to be involved in it.

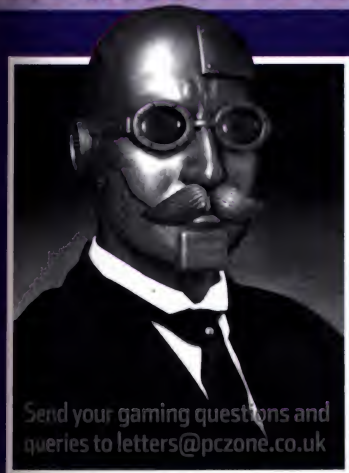
petepointon

*LEGO MechWarrior*, *LEGO X-Wing vs Tie Fighter*, and *LEGO: Total War* would loosen the velcro on my wallet faster than cheap cider loosens the virginities of Chavettes across Britain's council estates.  
bucked

Join in the forum fun at [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)

## MY IRON JUNG

For three years ZONE staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of analytical psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



Send your gaming questions and queries to [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk)

#### DEAR DR JUNG,

**Q** I've just finished *Prey*! What a crazy game, it left me wondering if we can expect a sequel. Well, can we?  
Ben\_Kenobi\_007

**A** It would seem to be the case Ben – when asked how he's been spending his time since finishing up on *Prey*, Scott Miller of 3D Realms responded by announcing his involvement in the development of *Prey 2*, a presumed follow-on to the quantum-physics bending alien-shooter. It's also claimed by the 3D Realms CEO that *Prey 2* will address concerns they had about combat, as well as adding new gameplay innovations. Beyond this, there's nothing more to report regarding this elusive sequel.

#### DEAR DR JUNG,

**Q** Why have EA Sports not released a *Fight Night* game on PC yet? I've played many a version on console, but I'm dismayed there's not a decent boxing sim on PC.  
Andy 'Mr Right' Hook

**A** Initial reports indicate that *Fight Night: Round 3*, following its release in February, will remain exclusive to Xbox, Xbox 360, PSP and PlayStation 2. Hypothetic analysis would suggest that such fast-paced fighting games would not adapt well to a keyboard and mouse control system, and furthermore their intrinsic multiplayer component would always be better suited to the confines of your sofa and widescreen television. Chance of a *Fight Night* appearing on PC: very unlikely.



# LETTERS



@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe street, london, nw1 6nw

## PC ZONE Around the World

### IN THE SEA SPECIAL!



We want photos of you with PC ZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

decent graphics card and oodles of RAM and have been hooked on *Civilization: Call To Power* for weeks on end – how can this be?

One more thing – I had a strange compulsion to buy *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004* last month. Do you think that's why it's re-emerged in the games charts? I can confirm it's as dull as you said. Oh, I was going to say something more constructive then, but no time – I need to go back to the loo...  
Nomorenoise

Don't let us keep you Nomorenoise, ZONE is the best bog-read in Christendom. You could be considered a bad father by destroying your son's fantasy figurines, but as long as you buy him PC ZONE every month without fail, we'll forgive you. **PCZ**



## THE ULTIMATE FPS

Just played the glorious *HL2: Episode One* and got to thinking: what would be the ultimate single-player FPS? How about this... Hero: Gordon Freeman, but with *F.E.A.R.*'s slo-mo and *Halo*'s rechargeable suit. Squad: Dog, Alyx, Barney and Sgt Moody from *Call Of Duty*. Weapons: *HL2*'s crowbar, crossbow, gravity gun and Antlion bug bait; *Far Cry*'s sniper rifle; *F.E.A.R.*'s shotgun, nailgun and Type 7 Particle weapon; *Quake*'s chaingun and rocket launcher; *Kingpin*'s flamethrower and *Crysis*' freeze-ray (even though it's not out yet!). Vehicles: *HL2*'s speedboat, *Halo*'s warthog, all of *UT2004*'s vehicles, *Chronicle Of Riddick*'s stomping robo-suit, helicopters, planes – you name it!

Enemies: the original *Half-Life*'s soldiers, *Far Cry*'s mercenaries, The Strogg, *F.E.A.R.*'s clone soldiers and *System Shock 2*'s cyborg midwives.

Bosses: Dr Breen, Paxton Fettel. Supervillain: *System Shock 2*'s Shodan. There would be no chapters – new levels would be loaded in-game, no quick-saves, only check-points. One level of difficulty (equivalent to *Far Cry* on Realistic), as many hours of gameplay and levels to explore as in *Oblivion* – and there would definitely be NO HEADCRABS, NO SCANNERS and NO TURRETS!  
Mark Ezra

**I want to play this now! Great stuff Mark – apart from the lack of headcrabs and quick-saves (which we won't go into now as it causes huge, unpleasant arguments in the office). We'll have more on this 'ultimate game' idea in PC ZONE very soon...**

## BAD DAD?

I'm far too old to be reading your mag, or so I'm told, but still it's a great way to spend some time on the loo. Just a few things I need to get off my chest. Sorry – didn't get the beardy-weirdy thing in issue 171. It must be genetic – you either love it or hate it. My son collects the little *Warhammer* figures and I make a point of crushing a few when he leaves them on the floor at night – am I a bad father? Also, I just spent £300 on a half-

## TXT ZONE

Thy say tht sniping is a 3 legged stool, if one is less thn th othr thn thrs a chance o it bcumin unbalncd an fallin ovr. The skills being tactics

Shitty zombies. Love The Hippy Farmer!

ive just become a dad again! He's called jamiewilllogstevewan dyrichiesuzypczoneisthebest. Actually its monty. Ant smith

*Magic Carpet 3* anyone? davidPanik

Hi sorry this a moan, i love your magazine bar non, but every time i get a magazine for the great read, and patches they dont install. For eg:- th

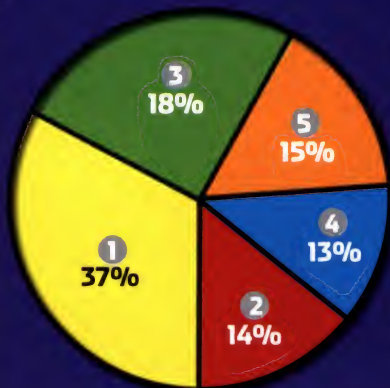
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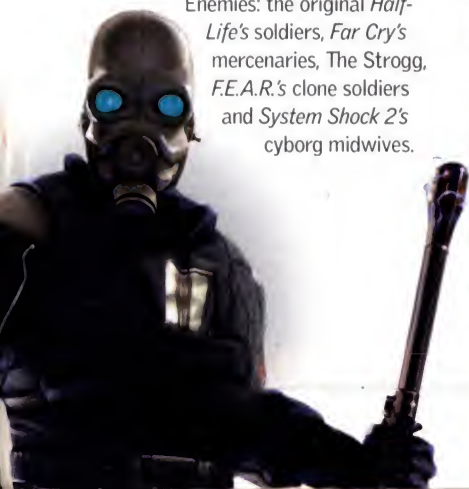
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## The Big Question

What would be the best use of a real-life portal?



- 1 Hugging yourself when you're feeling down: 37%
- 2 Confusing the cat with advanced quantum trickery: 14%
- 3 Reaching the fridge from your bed, just like Mr Tickle: 18%
- 4 Sneaking past ticket barriers at train stations: 13%
- 5 Having a good look at your own arse: 15%







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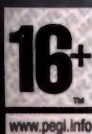
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**COVER STORY**

# TEAM FORTRESS 2

Massive exclusive! *PC ZONE* meet and greet the spies who came in from the cold...





**S**EATTLE, 1999: "I'M just going out for a while, I may be some time..." The last words of a mournful *TF* soldier before unzipping his tent, climbing out into the snowy wastes, aiming his weapon squarely at the ground and rocket-jumping into development oblivion. Seattle, 1969: by a bizarre fluke of rocket-jump physics, that same *TF* soldier lands in shiny cel-shaded glory in an era of cackling villains, volcano-bound secret bases and promiscuity. He was delighted – so delighted in fact that he invited all his friends out of development limbo and into the swinging '60s. And then the fun began...

PAGE

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PCZONE

## UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

## CITIZEN PORTER

**T**HIS MONTH, I'VE been made angry by MMO subscription prices. Now I'm already wary of any game with monthly fees because they make me feel guilty that I'm not playing enough – but for the bizarre double-life *World Of Warcraft* has granted me, I'm willing to make the sacrifice.

That said, I've been playing the *Archlord* beta – a fun enough game in itself – but have been horrified by the 'revolutionary' new subscription solution Codies have come up with. Essentially, there'll be three packages available for it: Squire (£6.99), Knight (£13.49) and Lord (£27.49) – and each package will come with more and more bonus credits that will work alongside the in-game currency when you're enhancing your character.

Last time I checked, online games were fun because everyone begins on a level playing field. Because of this, when you get killed or see another player on a big fancy mount, you know that they've earned it through the hours they've put in – as opposed to it being 'I can afford to pay £330 a year on an imaginary world joyride', while I'm doing the grind equivalent of working down a coalmine.

The class system in the real world is shit enough for the underdogs, so why replicate it somewhere that's supposed to be fun? Schemes like this can only breed ill-feeling and resentment. I'm going to inform the unshaven men that stand outside my local Boots and sell *Socialist Worker* while shouting at people, and I bet they won't like it either. Bye!

Will Porter

Will Porter, deputy editor

## REIN OF TERROR!

In a candid chat with **PC ZONE**, Epic vice president Mark Rein gives us his take on the future of PC gaming

**With the launch of next-gen consoles and the move to Vista, what state is PC gaming in?**

"I think the PC is at a crossroads – next-gen consoles are both creating and removing opportunities. As we get to a larger and larger install base of next-generation consoles, it'll be difficult to justify the economics of 'dumbing down' your game so you can sell it to enough PC owners to be worth doing. It ties in with my tirade against Intel and laptops, that the market is moving to inappropriate machines. As we get 10- or 20-million Xboxes out there, it's going to be very hard to justify the extra time and expense of dumbing down your title – one that you've worked really hard to raise the quality of on these platforms – and then make a not-so-good version of it so you can get a decent run at the PC market."

**So it's hard to make PC games, as you have to cater for lower-end machines?**

"Absolutely, or you can't make any money. The market for games that only run on hardcore PCs is very small, and those machines go out of date so quickly. A machine that was hardcore four years ago is nothing now."

**Do you think that all PC games will eventually be spread across multiple platforms?**

"There'll always be some games that beg to be on the PC. It's hard to see RTS games taking off on the consoles, but things like RPGs, we're starting to see them getting just as good on consoles as they are on PCs. *Oblivion*, for example. I used to think it

was so much easier to play *World Of Warcraft* on keyboard and mouse, but the truth is they could easily adapt that to a console as well.

"I think games on the PC will also be on other platforms, just for the sheer economics of it. It's expensive to develop games and people are demanding a more immersive experience all the time. People say graphics don't matter, but that's nonsense – people demand a more immersive experience because they've seen it and they've got used to it. If you went back and broadcast scratchy black-and-white TV like you had 40 years ago, nobody would want to watch that. We've moved beyond it.

"So it's important for us to deliver the best possible experience, and right now it's easier to do that on consoles and it's tougher to do it on PC."

**Is this something you've found with *UT2007* – that you get better, quicker, faster graphics with the consoles?**

"You can always find a PC that'll be better than a console, because you can put many gigs of memory in it – two, four processors – but are there enough of those PCs to make it worthwhile? And you also have pirates on PC, so two-thirds of the people playing your game aren't even paying you for it."

**Are you against episodic content?**

The thing is, the industry does episodic content already (expansion packs) – it's just getting a new name. My concern is not whether it's good or bad – and you're either a fan of it, or you're not. Rather, I'm concerned that some developers think they can build a business model around building a little bit of a game. First, you can't build a little bit of a



Mark Rein:  
cheeky happy.

game' – and putting it out electronically and hoping enough money's going to come in to pay for the next little bit of it, and the next; that's a very dangerous thing to try if you're not *Half-Life 2*. You need marketing – distribution by itself is just distribution. It's not a solution to bypass the publisher and traditional marketing.

"My real concern is that developers will think they can do it on their own, and can do it without publishers, and produce little dribs of their game. People may think, 'Maybe that's Mark talking out of personal interest', because I realise I have that interest – but that's nonsense. I'm saying it out of an interest to keep developers alive, and warning them off things that I think are going to be suicidal for them."

So how secure is the future of the PC? We don't subscribe to half the views of Mr Rein, but he's still a hugely important voice in gaming and always good value. Expect an in-depth feature in the coming months. Write angry letters too: we like them.

STOP PRESS!

## PANIC STATIONS!

A creation of the nice chaps at Introversion, *DEFCON* has been announced as a Steam title. Obvious really, but happening anyway.

## SEGA BONANZA

*Virtua Tennis 3* and *Sonic Riders* are both getting the PC treatment. We'd still rather have whatever Obsidian are cooking up for Sega.

## PHENOMENAL TAKEOVER

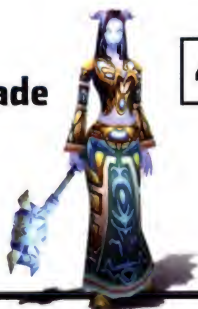
Sort of. EA have continued their assault on world development by eating Phenomic, the makers of *SpellForce 2*, and branding them with the EA stamp.



20

## WOW: The Burning Crusade

Get mildly singed by your proximity to Blizzard's epic expansion as we go through the Dark Portal.



42

## Assassin's Creed

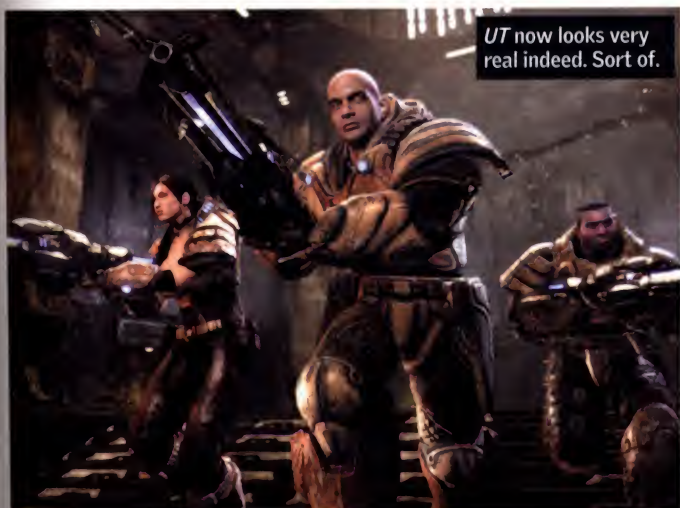
Get mildly stabbed in the neck as we roll around a field hugging Ubi's jaw-dropping medieval crusader romp.



52

## Valve Feature

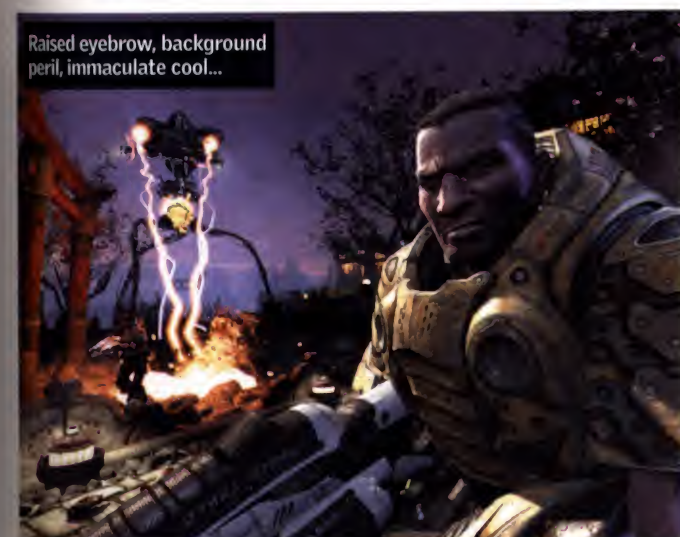
Get mildly crowbarred, go through a portal and get set on fire by a Pyro as we cuddle up to Uncle Valve.



UT now looks very real indeed. Sort of.



Runs on Tom Cruise's blood don't you know.



Raised eyebrow, background peril, immaculate cool...

# Kane. Is. Back

Original Nod villain signs on the dotted line for *C&C3*

**JOE KUCAN**, KING of FMV in terms of both directing them for EA/Westwood and starring in them as the messiah-complex megalomaniac Kane, is re-clenching his fist for *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars*. Kane, famed for growling into the camera like an *American History X* Ed Norton and saying things like, "No, I'm not god. But I'm a close second," before adding "Bwahahaha!" will star in old-style, yet mega-budget, FMV sections to tie together a tale of a fresh Brotherhood Of Nod offensive on a Tiberium-ravaged earth. Fresh images of flame-tanks and buggies have also ramped up the *PC ZONE* hype-mobile. One vision, one purpose!

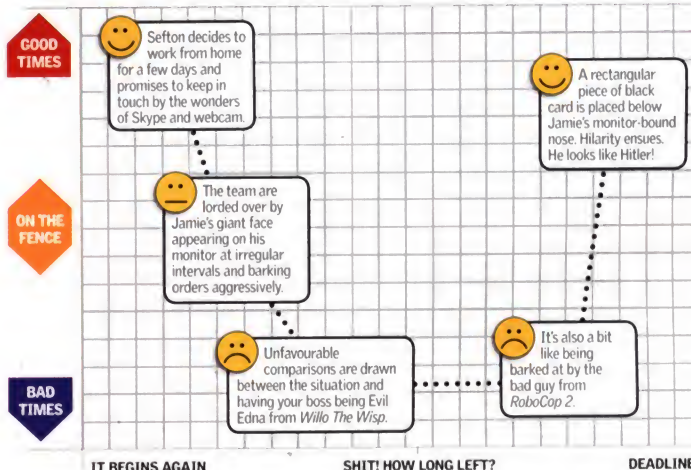


"You can't kill the messiah!"

## STUFF

*Star Trek: Legacy* is to feature the voice of every single solitary *Star Trek* captain – the real-world actors behind Kirk, Picard, Janeway, Sisko and Beckett – all providing their stiff barking tones to the developers at Mad Doc. All we need now is Marina Sirtis, Q and whoever it was that played the evil Holodeck Moriarty and we'll be ready to go! And Ricardo Montalban. We want him too.

## LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER

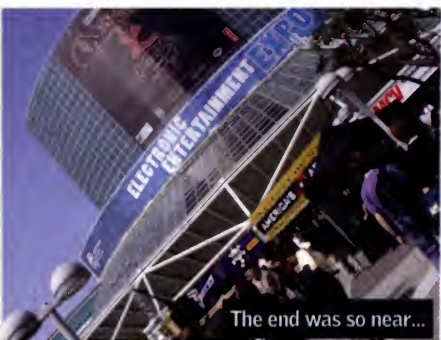




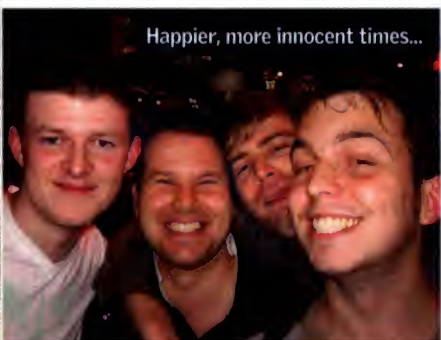


# WHO KILLED E3?

**PC ZONE** turns a private dick's eye to the life, death and rebirth of the world's biggest games convention...



The end was so near...



Happier, more innocent times...



It's Pavel! And he's only on a bike!

Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ pavel barter, pc zone,  
2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw



**Reporter**  
Pavel Barter

## DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES.

A godforsaken scumhole of high-rise towers and grotesquely deformed vagrants, best known for three

things: the skyscraper that John McClane wrecked in *Die Hard*; the courthouse where murderous hippies shaved their heads during the Charles Manson trial; and E3 Expo, the biggest games show since the Roman Empire's christian/lion conundrum. E3 was big. So big, in fact, that you felt like an Oompa-Loompa in the Chocolate Factory, or a dingleberry in the drawers of the Jolly Green Giant.

Aside from pissing in the Playboy Mansion, gatecrashing private parties and helping Steve-O from *Jackass* throw cocktail waitresses into swimming pools, the E3 experience involved rushing around the labyrinthian Convention Centre, trying (failing) to meet interview appointments and growing blisters on your blisters. Like Dante's version of hell, the deeper you wandered into E3's bowels, the more horrific it became.

At least, this was the way E3 used to be. In a move that's shaken up the industry and seen bloggers flagellate themselves with outrage, The Entertainment

Software Association (ESA) has announced that E3 as we know it is no more. "The new E3 will take shape over the next few months," says ESA president Doug Lowenstein. It'll be as shapely as a block of lard, reckon the flagellating bloggers.

A few top-dog games publishers and console manufacturers remain tight-lipped about the whole affair, saying stuff like: "At this time, we don't have anything to add specific to the Vivendi Games presence at E3. We look forward to hearing more from the ESA as they finalise the details of the 2007 show." But loads have welcomed the change: "Microsoft is very supportive of the ESA's decision in providing a new vision for E3."

## FROM THE DEPTHS

From its inception, E3 set out to be louder than war. Perhaps the games industry was reacting to its treatment in the early 1990s, when developers showcased their wares alongside car alarms and refrigerators at the bi-annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Back then, the industry was like a dirty secret, especially during the CES summer show where the bottom floor of the warehouse was reserved for porno peddlers.

In May 1995, Los Angeles opened its drawbridge to the first E3 Expo and

exhibitors filled the Convention Centre's 540,000 square feet with giant booths and (perhaps inspired by CES), ladies dressed like hookers. The event then went from strength to strength, attracting over 60,000 attendees and 400 exhibitors every year.

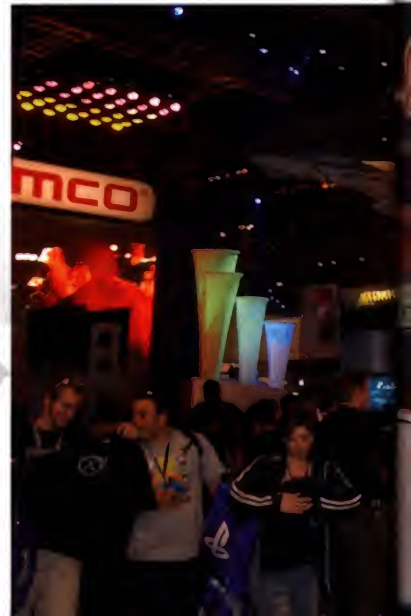
For developers, this annual orgy of interaction was often helpful. "E3 is a benchmark – a chance to see what our competition is doing, what the rest of the EA studios are doing and a chance to showcase our game to the public," explains DJ Powers, producer of EA's *Tiger Woods* games. "This year we showed off UCAP, our new system that allows golfers to express real emotions within the game. E3 gives us that platform."

BioWare also benefits from E3, says co-founder Greg Zeschuk. "We make sure we've got E3 demo time planned in all of our development schedules. The result is that we have gathered a tremendous number of E3 awards over the years for games like *Jade Empire*, *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic*, *Neverwinter Nights* and *Baldur's Gate*."

Michael Rawlinson, managing director of the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA) adds that E3 provides the space and environment for the UK games industry to meet and conduct business



Can we stop using this picture now then?







**"The show has become too big, too expensive. It's an ineffective show in terms of bang for your buck"**

Mike Goodman, videogame analyst, Yankee Group

with companies from around the world. "Many companies have taken advantage of the support and visibility the UK pavilion has provided; a dedicated meeting space and a professional location."

### SPLASH THE CASH

But the seeds for E3's combustion were sewn early on. Competition heated up between the major players as each tried to better the other, splashing out on bigger booths, bigger parties and bigger babes. Even the wee fellas got carried away. In 1997, TerraGlyph Interactive Studios – creators of fairytale edutainment games – spent several million dollars on a booth so large it had to be inspected for earthquake building codes. Unsurprisingly, TerraGlyph went belly-up the following year.

By 1998 when the show briefly relocated to Atlanta, over 70,000 were attending and the publishers threw cash around like drunken sailors. Sony hired the Foo Fighters to perform at its closing night party; Nintendo tried to better them with the B-52s, while one exhibitor

splashed out \$8 million on parties, hotel rooms and transport.

Fast-forward the clock to 2004 and step inside Ubisoft's booth: a mammoth gateway leading to a world as impressive as any Hollywood set or Disneyland ride: from the steamy tropics of *Far Cry*, to the *Brothers In Arms* military barracks, to *Prince Of Persia's* Eastern delights. By 2006, when games publishers spent over \$12 million in floor space (that's before employee or booth costs and parties), it was clear something had to give.

### THE END IS NIGH

"The show has become too big, too expensive. It has lost its way," explains Mike Goodman, a videogame analyst with Boston's Yankee Group. "E3 is designed for publishers to introduce new products to the market and the media, but it's almost impossible for anyone but a handful of the very largest companies to get their message out. Even then, they have had to spend millions of dollars. It's an ineffective show in terms of bang for your buck."

## PC ZONE's best of E3

Our top five moments from the greatest videogames show on earth



### Playboy Mansion

Dave Woods, Steve Hill and Jamie Sefton attending the launch of *The Sims* rip-off *Playboy: The Mansion* at Hefner's Beverly Hills gaff. Models with painted-on bikinis, masturbating monkeys, the grotto, copious booze and hosing down Heff's trees.



### Porn Valley

Meeting the cream of the porn industry at ex-staffer Paul Mallinson's amazing San Fernando hillside retreat, complete with swimming pool, palm trees, hot tub, barbecue and sofa "with authentic stain".



### You Crazy Fool!

It was truly an epiphany when our man-mountain Martin Korda met his hero and body-building inspiration, Mr T. The A-Team's BA Baracus shook his hand and said our muscle-bound freelancer was "a very powerful man".



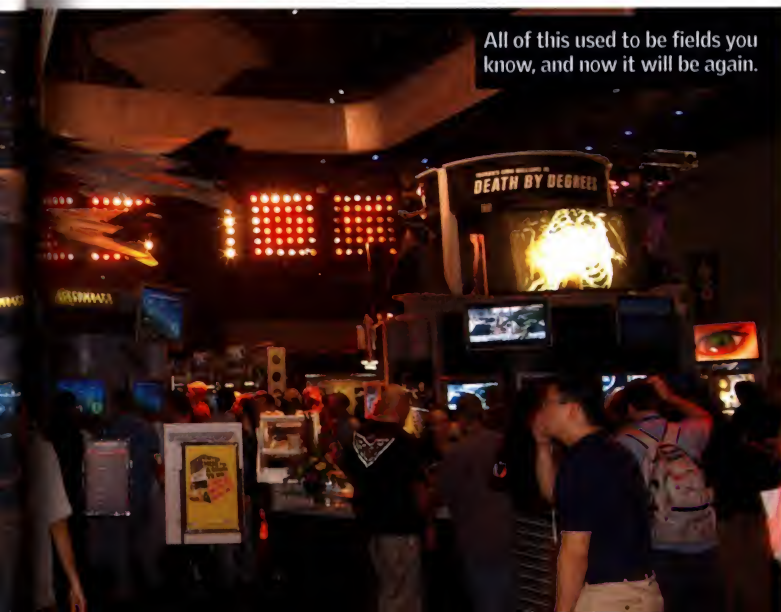
### Sky Bar At The Standard

Scene of many debauched evenings, including the exotic window dancers at the Eidos party, and the night Steve Hill had a group of trendy types he didn't recognise turned away. It was the Black Eyed Peas.



### Half-Life 2

Dave Woods and Jamie Sefton turning up on the first day of E3 2003 to see Valve's first showing of *Half-Life 2*. The subsequent jaw-dropping trailer practically rendered the rest of the show redundant.



All of this used to be fields you know, and now it will be again.

"This is something that's been building over a number of years, as E3 has grown to become more of a monstrosity. The main publishers have been the impetus for change, because they're the ones paying most for it. But it's fundamentally something that most publishers across the board will be happy to see."

According to the ESA, the 'new E3' – the E3 Media Festival 2007 – is to take shape over the coming months, but will definitely leave the mammoth Convention Centre, reducing its audience from 60,000 to a more mannerly 5,000, invite-only (which explains the pissed-off bloggers). Neither developers nor

publishers seem too miffed at the changes. "E3 became way over-hyped," admits EA's DJ Powers, while Greg Zeschuk's suspects that "E3 will likely turn into a more focused event ... It'll be a smaller show that showcases the games and only the games."

In fact, aside from bloggers, the only losers in E3's death (and subsequent rebirth) is the city of Los Angeles – hotels, restaurants, Russian cabbies and the like – who creamed over \$50 million during the event. Who killed E3? It killed itself, shuddering to a halt on its fat arse after years of gaudy razzmatazz. Just like Elvis, then. **PCZ**





FEELING HOT HOT HOT...

# WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

*Rhianna Pratchett* experiences life beyond the Dark Portal

DEVELOPER Blizzard PUBLISHER VU Games WEBSITE [www.worldofwarcraft.com/burningcrusade](http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/burningcrusade) PREVIOUSLY IN... 170

## THE LOWDOWN

Two brand new races to play with



New Outlands area for levels 55-70



New jewel-crafting profession and socketed items



Flying mounts!



New racial traits may be overpowered



ETA  
**THIS  
YEAR**

**A**ESTHETICALLY, WHAT kind of *World Of Warcraft* character do you go for? Do you like the big, no-nonsense, tough-guy orcs and taurens – the kind that could splinter bones with their little fingers and don't get invited to dinner parties? Maybe you don't like straying too far from the norm and prefer humans. Sensible, dependable, no unnecessary horns, lovely little bit of Chaucerian countryside and scones for tea. Perhaps you prefer something a bit nicer to look at, a lithe female night-elf with a chain-mail bikini and a generous nature when it comes to giving out lap-dances?

Whatever you choose, there's usually a bit of you in there somewhere, or perhaps a little bit of fantasising about what you'd like to be, should you ever find yourself raised in a world of swords and sorcery.

During the last year and a half, various posts have sprung up in the *WOW* forums

debating the visual appeal of the Horde and Alliance avatars. One of the theories was that players (with a side-note towards female ones) weren't choosing Horde characters because, well, they're a bit nasty-looking. In the US, Alliance players far outweigh the Horde ones, although we evil-inclined Europeans tend to sway a little more towards the dark side.

It certainly looks like a factor Blizzard have taken onboard when developing the Alliance-based Draenei and the Hordish Blood Elves, their new characters for *WOW*'s expansion, *The Burning Crusade*. Frank Pearce, senior VP of product development at Blizzard, explains further: "The aesthetic look of our new characters was certainly a consideration and it wasn't just a consideration for female players. In

Asia, we've found that players of both genders are more attracted to the Alliance characters, which they find more visually pleasing. But mainly, we just wanted to focus on making the content fun and compelling, which will draw people to it regardless of their gender or culture."

## BLOODY ELVES!

The Blood Elves are very conventionally attractive avatars, very Aryan-looking. They splintered away from the High Elves, you see, after the race almost got wiped out, and now they've developed an insane lust for magic and self-preservation. They're vain, haughty and selfish – everything elves should be. In an average evening out, they'd be the ones at the back on their own, nursing a gin and tonic, while the



THE STORY SO FAR...  
**BLIZZARD**



**Ready to go**  
Allen Adham, Mike Morhaine and Frank Pearce team up to form Silicon & Synapse.



**Swirly stuff**  
Renamed Blizzard, they release their first title, *Warcraft: Orcs & Humans*.

**Let it commence!**  
Blizzard's battlenet is launched, originally to give multiplayer support to *Diablo*.



**World at war**  
*WoW* launches and exceeds its yearly subscriber expectations in one month.

1991

1994

1996

2004

Mr Purple in a giant mushroom field.  
It's like that dream I had the other night.

**The Blood Elves are vain, haughty and selfish – as all elves should be**

Battling the giant bottle-stopper figure is all in a day's work.

She'd be wise not to go chasing that waterfall.

rest go Alliance-skull bowling and letch at the seemingly un-undead breasts of undead ladies.

Players opting for the Blood Elf race will get the chance to choose from warrior, mage, priest, rogue, hunter or paladin. In hues of rather Christmassy red and gold, these guys are a stark contrast to the rest of the Horde and their architecture is relentlessly cheery and colourful. But, being elves, totally over-the-top and grandiose.

## FITS THE SLOT

But the Blood Elf and Draenei experience isn't just slotted into the front of the game. The designers are going back





## Racial harmony?

The jury's still out on the new racial traits...



Dare you stand against my tap'n'torrent? Dare you?

Both the Draenei and the Blood Elves come with some pretty damn powerful racial traits. The Blood Elves, given their natural affinity with magic, have +5 to all resistances and also a bonus to the enchanting skill. However, their most powerful racial trait comes in the form of 'Mana Tap', which allows them to suck mana from another creature, store it as buffs and then release those buffs in a silencing and interruptive attack, known as 'Arcane Torrent'. This also allows the caster to gain back mana or energy.

The Draenei are very light-orientated, so Blizzard tells us, which is the reason behind their improved shadow resistance. The also have a healing buff 'The blessing of Naru', as well as a chance-to-hit bonus. At first glance these do look like rather overpowered racial traits – only time will tell how they play out in the game.

through all the level 20-60 areas and making sure there are appropriate bridging quests, NPCs and lore for the new races. This is being done to ensure, as Pearce puts it, that "everything feels relevant to you and you don't feel like you're an outcast".

## BLUES BROTHERS

In contrast, the Draenei seem to fill the 'slightly-unusual-looking' gap in the current Alliance line-up. Despite being blue-skinned, cloven-hoofed and semi-demonic looking, they're still quite handsome beasts. Being an alien life-form obviously suits them very well. However, their trans-dimensional spaceship has crash-landed on Kalimdor (specifically on the Azuremyst islands off the coast of Darkshore), which doesn't sit quite so well.

Still, they're picking up the pieces (their home city, Exodar, is actually part of their huge spaceship), and are finding a home for themselves through the mastery of the paladin, shaman, warrior, hunter, priest and mage classes. They quite like this new world as it's rich in crystals, objects central to the Draenei's way of life. This dovetails nicely with the new jewel-crafting profession (in which the Draenei have a bonus). More on that later.

One of the most important aspects of the Blood Elves and the Draenei, and something that's caused huge debate in the forums, is that they give the

Alliance access to the shaman class, and the Horde access to the paladin class. Previously, these two were excluded classes, which gave a marked difference to each side.

This has caused parts of the *WOW* community to worry that it will mean there's no real difference between the sides, save for environments and avatars. Pearce defends this decision: "Our designers were really excited about the opportunity. They felt that the shaman and the paladin had been homogenised, due to the shaman only being accessible to the Horde and the paladin only accessible to the Alliance, yet they needed to put in content that's relevant to everyone. They were keen to do more with the paladin and shaman classes." So does this mark the end of notable differences between the races?

Pearce continues: "We're evaluating ways to make the Horde and Alliance paladins and shamans distinct from each other in the way the undead priest is distinct from the human priest. But certainly, the racial traits of the new races will add a different flavour to the classes."

## SHINY THINGS

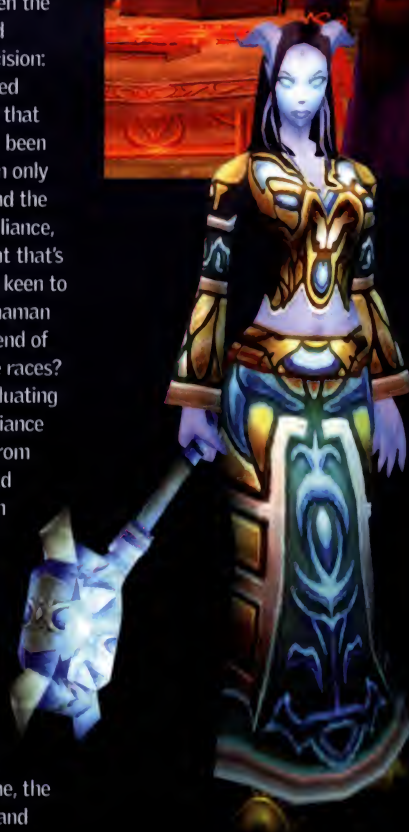
While the current professions give their masters the potential to make pretty much every kind of armour or weapon in the game, the lack of a skill to make jewellery and



A spider, a hedgehog and a member of the Village People merge for the ultimate nightmare.



Big ears and bright eyes – it's a very *now* look.

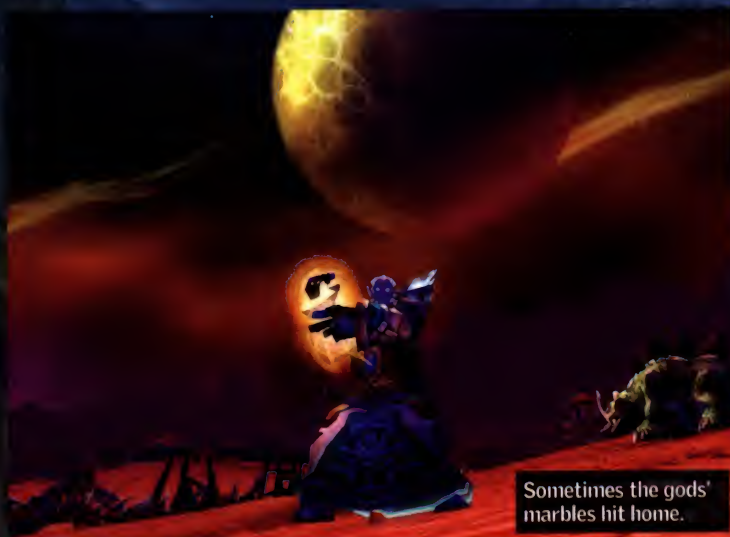


trinkets is noticeably absent. But no longer, for jewel-crafting is about to make its debut. Players who adopt this profession will not only be able to craft all sorts of bling, but they'll also be able to create refined gems, which have statistics attributed to them.

Another new feature which ties in with jewel-crafting is socketed items. As you'd expect from the name, this basically means items that have spaces for gems to be inserted. Socketed items will cover all kinds of items in the game, not just the high-level ones, and will drop from mobs. The designers are also going back and revisiting skills such as tailoring and leatherwork to allow these professions to create socketed items.

There are a few different elements to socketing. As well as simply putting gems into the slots (which can't be removed, although they can be replaced





Sometimes the gods' marbles hit home.



You too can have mighty eyebrows.



Self-absorbed, haughty and selfish: Blood Elves are cat people.



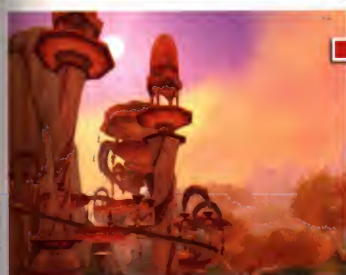
The new races duke it out.



Is this the bridge Simon & Garfunkel had in mind?

## Circle of life

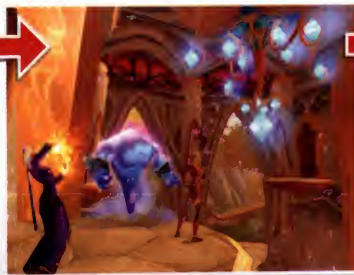
If you play as a Blood Elf, here's what life has in store for you...



You start Blood Elf life on Sunstrider Isle in the Eastern Kingdoms, just North of the Eastern Plague lands.



Sunstrider Isle will provide content for Blood Elves from level 1-20. Just like a Blood Elf creche really.



It doesn't matter how pretty a Blood Elf you are though – you still have to fight honking great blue things.



The Dark Portal, an obvious metaphor for death, will allow access to the Outlands once you reach level 55.

by other gems), some slots are coloured, which can offer extra benefits when the correspondingly-coloured gem is inserted. There will also be meta-gems in the game which afford extra benefits when combined with certain other gems.

### BRAVE NEW WORLD

The new area in the game is the Outlands, which lies beyond the Dark Portal in the Blasted Lands and is set to contain high-level content for levels 55-70. As well as new beasts to kill (and train), the Outlands will contain several brand-new zones and instances. Central to the Outlands area, and the feature that people are most excited by (and consequently Blizzard are drip-feeding info about), are flying mounts.

Blizzard haven't announced anything about what the mounts are going to look like or cost. The recently released

mount demo shows a large dragon creature with a fish's tail and blue sparkles around it, as if it's in a permanent state of disco. Pearce is keen to point out this is "just a placeholder creature". Although he reveals that flying mounts will be able to move fast along the ground too, you can be attacked from the ground while on one (although they're not sure what to do should your mount vanish while you're flying it). They're also considering epic and rare mounts.

As the recent linked auction house feature has shown, sometimes it's the smaller things that make the biggest impact. A new feature that looks like doing just that is adjustable difficulty levels for the five-person dungeon instances. This will allow the leader of the group to select whether a dungeon is normal level or two difficulty levels above. But just so that the extra

challenge is worth it, the potential spiffy loot-droptage will also increase.

Ah, there's just so much to tell you about and only a finite amount of pages to do it in. So if a new zone, two new races, a new profession, flying mounts and socketing wasn't enough, then how about five new spells/skills per class, two new tiers for the talent trees, teleporters that link cities together and outdoor arenas for gladiatorial style combat? Excited yet?

Well, sorry to have to dampen your ardour, but one of the things that the developers aren't forthcoming about is a release date. "This year" is the best that could be dragged out of Pearce. It's pretty annoying to have to circle almost half a year's worth of calendar in red. But just because it's you Blizzard, we'll do it. After all, you took our lives and you made us heroes. **PCZ**





**COMING  
SOON...**Nobody ever found out about  
Tony's Top Man modelling.

# SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS

**Andy Robinson puts on a flared suit and goes on a crime spree...**DEVELOPER Radical Entertainment PUBLISHER VU Games WEBSITE [www.scarfacegame.com](http://www.scarfacegame.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... 172

## THE LOWDOWN

Play as Tony 'F***ing' Montana	✓
Miami is massive with little loading	✓
Builds on the proven GTA formula	✓
Huge soundtrack and great voice-acting	✓
Graphically, it's looking a bit rough	✗

**ETA  
OCT**

**O**VER 20 YEARS on, *Scarface* is still hot property, and considering the film's abundance of guns, girls and creative swearing, it's no surprise that the rights were snapped up for a gaming reprisal. With Al Pacino himself having backed the project, things are looking good for *The World Is Yours*, but can the game do what *The Godfather* obviously couldn't, and live up to one of the most iconic films of all time? Recent play impressions left us hopeful.

Last seen floating face-down in a posh fountain, and now alive thanks to the liberal tearing-up of the script's final page, Radical have done an excellent job of perfecting Pacino's virtual guise. Everything right down to his ice cream-obsessed one-liners and even his mannerisms when he speaks are spot-on, and Montana's voice is equally well done – if unlikely to make your gran warm to him.

The team at Radical haven't spent the entire time studying Al Pacino's eyebrow

movements though – they've also conjured up some genuine improvements over the standard *GTA* formula.

One particular issue they had with *Grand Theft Auto* is the large amount of fetching in the game, which sometimes has you skipping across town just to get a pistol from behind a dumpster. In *Scarface*, some quick side-menu magic has Tony flick out his cell-phone and call his driver, who quickly rolls up the street with your car of choice, loaded full of pump-action goodies thanks to your equally-useful arms dealer. This is just one example of how Radical is bringing the world to the player.

## THE DRUGS DO WORK

Arguably the most crucial element of *GTA's* success has been the series' intricate and believable game worlds, and *Scarface* thus follows suit with its own massive rendition of Miami. Across the city's four conquerable turfs, one of the most interesting locales is the harbour,

where you can hitch a boat and cast-off for some island-to-island drug smuggling action. This kind of gameplay features more as you progress in the game; in latter stages an empire-management screen gives you access to all kinds of details and stats on your business fronts, including the option to fortify them against enemy attacks with security cameras and hired goons. This latter half of the game certainly looks more in-depth than previously expected, and builds on the turf-war concept that *San Andreas* first mooted, yet failed to capitalise on.

Building further on the drug-trafficking gameplay, there are also sections where you're tasked with making drug deals yourself. When initiating a deal, you're presented with a bizarre pie-chart mini-game thing. Bugger it up and you'll end up in a drug-dealer gun-fight; get it right and the white stuff is yours. It's just like real life, only with more pie charts.

The work doesn't end there either: you've also got to launder your 'dirty'



## WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

### ANGER MANAGEMENT

Skilfully shoot someone in the head or balls and you'll build up points towards blind range mode, which sends you into an invincible first-person rampage where aiming is automatic and enemies don't stand much chance of living.

### YOUR MOTHER IS A HAMSTER

Tony's certainly not shy of trash-talking and this has been worked into combat through the taunt button. Deliver a successful taunt and your enemy will cower in shock – and probably cry as well.

### COLOURFUL LANGUAGE

Carrying on the tradition of the film, *Scarface: TWIY* is filled with lots of filthy language, including one memorable message we received after falling from an overpass: 'You f\*\*\*ed up!' Charming.

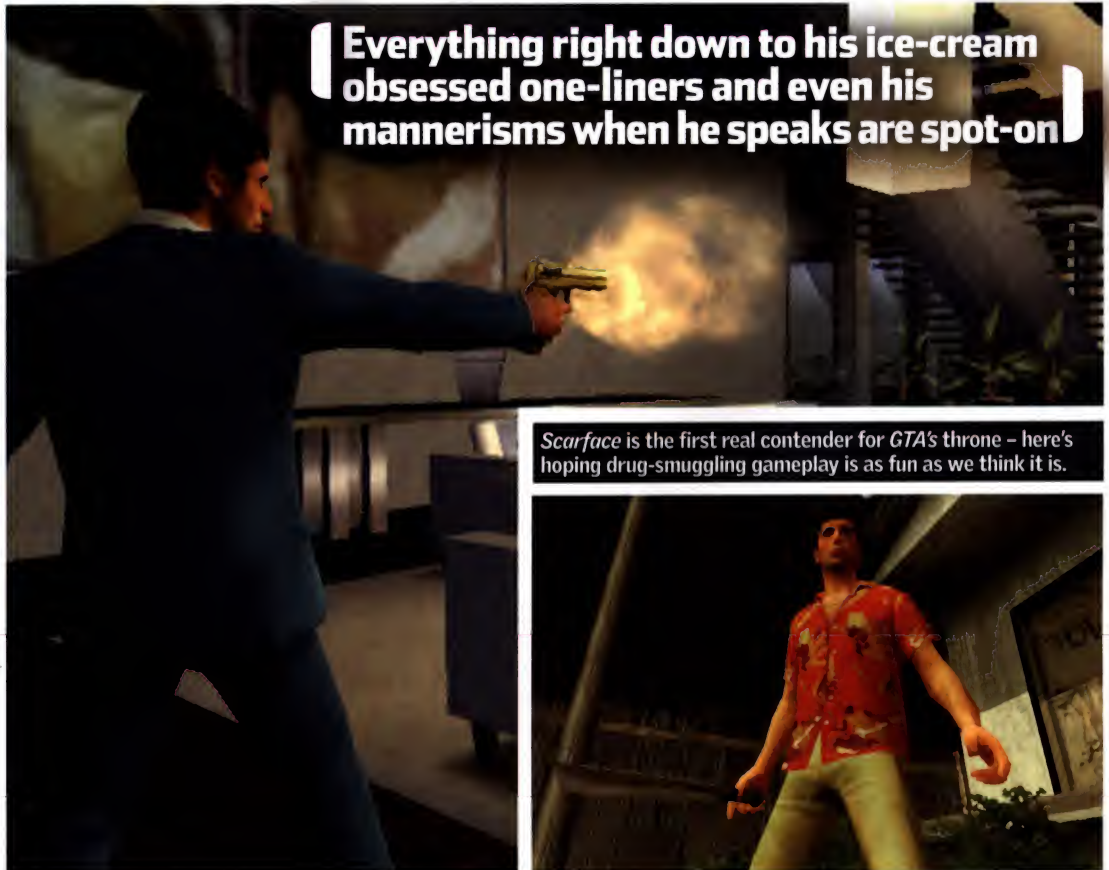
### SMOOTH GROOVES

The game's soundtrack features music from both the film's time period and present day, including tracks from Johnny Cash, LL Cool J and the film's original composer, Giorgio Moroder. No word on any Cheeky Girls inclusions...



money throughout the game to shake off cops, and rival gangs are never far away. In the near-final version of the game, these all seem like genuinely interesting and fun mechanics necessarily entrenched in a rather consoley way, but whether or not they'll be enough to snatch GTA's throne remains to be seen. **PCZ**

Everything right down to his ice-cream obsessed one-liners and even his mannerisms when he speaks are spot-on



*Scarface* is the first real contender for GTA's throne – here's hoping drug-smuggling gameplay is as fun as we think it is.





**BOMBER COMMAND**

The red team is sending out bombers, and these can be launched from airbases or carriers. The fog of war prevents the red and green teams seeing any units outside of their radar coverage, so make sure you position your radars effectively.

**GIMME SHELTER**

Oh dear. These white circles show the mushroom clouds top-down, so Seoul and Shenyang have just been utterly demolished. There are several game modes - mainly, you start with 100 points and lose them as your population dies, but in some modes you gain points for slaughtering the enemy.

**HOT  
SHOT**

# DEFCON

**DEVELOPER** Introversion **PUBLISHER** Introversion  
**WEBSITE** [www.everybody-dies.com](http://www.everybody-dies.com) **ETA** September

**I**F YOU'VE EVER imagined yourself being 1980s teen movie icon Matthew Broderick in *WarGames* (rather than the cool character he played in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*), then (a) you're a geek-proud *ZONE* reader, and (b) you'll love the retro-chic celebration of Thatcher-Reagan era nuclear paranoia that is *DEFCON*. Created by talented indie Brit developers Introversion, most recently responsible for *Darwinia* (available on Valve's Steam system), *DEFCON* is an online multiplayer real-time strategy game that puts you in Dr Strangelove's underground bunker and hands you the nuclear button. The task? Exterminate the enemy's population while saving your own. Do you want to play a game?



### DON'T PANIC!

The *DEFCON* level shows what offensive manoeuvres can be made by each player, ranging from 5 (no hostile actions allowed) to 1 (launch the nukes!). It also ramps up the tension by ticking down roughly every five minutes.

### UP PERISCOPE

These six red subs carry 30 nukes between them, with the red nuclear icons showing the targets for the red team's attack. Los Angeles has been targeted here because, according to Introversion, "they never liked E3 anyway..."

launch detected

launches detected

### PUSH THE BUTTON

Various icons are used to display useful info, including 'Comms' for chatting with other players on an in-game IRC (both public and private) for forming alliances; and 'People', which shows population density and is handy for selecting targets for maximum death-kill.



allies



comms



scores



radar



people



orders



territory



nukes



info





Dear Steve,

So here's the thing. Every time we talk to Crytek they apologise for the mutants in *Far Cry* and claim they'll do better in *Crysis* – but I liked the Trigen. They were scary, they jumped a long way, they were often unpredictable – so what if they leaped at you and killed you in two chops? That's what a monkey fed with genetic bananas would do in real life.

Will Porter

Dear Will,

You know what's not fun? Having a blob of mutated monkey polygons jump at you from six miles away and slash your face open before you know what's going on. They were as unpredictable as the journey plans of the hideously obese. You see a Trigen, it kills you. I could write out its AI routine in a single line. If *trigenSeesYou* = TRUE, then *trigenKillsYou* = 'yes it does'. Boring. Steve Hogarty

Dear Steve,

Boring? That bit where you can let them out of their cages and they start running riot is boring? The outbreak of Trigen war at dawn is boring? Come on Steve – I'll admit that they're not as fun to fight against as the Mercs, but they're not dull. And their power and speed is what makes them such a challenge to fight. WP

Dear Will

OK, so it might be fun to see them killing something else. But you can't honestly tell me that when you first come across a Trigen with a machine gun, who also happened to be invisible, that you sat back in awe and thought: "Wow – now there's a great enemy." Making shit enemies invisible wasn't fun in *Doom*, and it's not fun now. SH

Dear Steve,

I'm sorry, did I ever say the Trigen were perfect? I'm just saying they've received some bad press that's a mite unfair – even getting stick from their own creators. It's like some sort of postmodern Frankenstein story. WP

Dear Will,

Why don't you just marry a Trigen? SH

Dear Steve,

I probably would, but have unfortunately already married a barrel back in issue 163's Argue The Toss column.

WP

# LOVE ME DO

How *BIA: Hell's Highway*, the marmite of war gaming, is fighting for your affections

www.biagame.com | ETA: 2007

**SOME LOVE IT**, others hate it – so busy little beavers Gearbox, having strapped Sergeant Matt Baker into the Unreal 3 Engine, are doing their utmost to gazump the boo boys. But how?

Well, first off kids, you can jump over walls and so can your team – which is progress in motion if we've ever seen it. What's more, the sticking point of the engrained *Brothers In Arms* arsenal's fabled inaccuracy has been, from what we've seen, highly tweaked – and will now be able to hit barndoor with banjos. Third, and perhaps most importantly for *Brothers In Arms* detractors, the addition of a third fire-team (perhaps a mortar team, perhaps a bazooka team) is being complemented by some far less constrictive level design, and more varied paths through the Dutch towns and villages during Operation Market Garden.

Gearbox are also tinkering with the way the story is told – wherever possible telling the story from the Baker FPS viewpoint. They're also really

ratcheting up the body awareness angle by having scripted moments in which you, for example, pull shrapnel from your bloodied arm after an explosion.

Everything is remaining supremely within the realm of apple pie-Americana, though. They're very proud of their brand of soldier chit-chat about girls and wistful thoughts of ma's home cooking over at Gearbox, and now they have introduced this thing called 'Bro-Mos' (that's 'Brotherly Moments' in English), when your team pick each other up or your own character catches a wounded soldier as he falls towards you.

The battlefield won't solely comprise of your comrades and the Bosch either, there'll be petrified citizens running hither and thither every once in a while to add a touch of extra humanity to proceedings. Now slated for a release early next year, *Hell's Highway* certainly looks like it'll be popular round these parts – and we're pretty sure a few of the nay-sayers will be won over to boot.



Look! In the distance!  
Wall jumping!



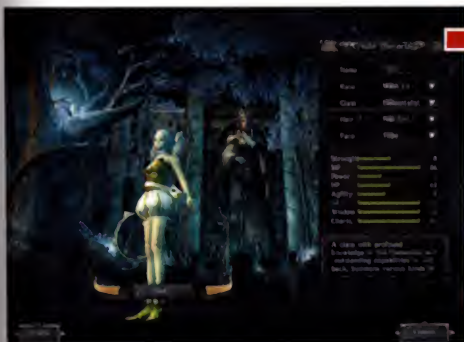


# I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO BE KING...

## Will Porter takes his first tentative steps towards godhood in Archlord

www.archlordgame.com | ETA: October

**THE BIG DEAL** about *Archlord* is that there's one player who rules them all. Could be you, could be me – if either of us have put enough effort in. Join me then as I leap into the magical world of Chantra, and take my first steps towards absolute power. It corrupts you know, so it must be good...



**12:23** Character selection. OK, so I want to play an elf rather than human or orc. I reject the Blood Moon Elementalists whose character model wears a bulging skirt-shorts garment that makes it look like she's shat herself – choosing instead the sultry Moon Elf Ranger.



**12:31** Batsphinx the Moon Elf Ranger is up and running. Re: becoming Archlord – if I put in a good grind, then by teatime I could at least become a prominent council member. The supreme leader's flying dragon, weather control and 20 monster guardians seem a way off.



**12:32** Before I run off at the behest of one Bosren to kill some Barricks (whatever they are), an indecent slip of the mouse reveals that the game is, indeed, of Eastern origin. The similarity of the HUD to *RF Online* was perhaps another clue.



**12:42** Turns out that Barricks are giant rats that have bred with duck-billed platypuses, and they're not particularly violent. One click on them sees Batsphinx whip out a string of combos on their asses. My gazillion skill slots are all empty bar one, so I'm not exactly up for PvP just yet.



**12:50** Bosren, the Barrick-hater, has a letter for his sister, an elfen fortune-teller who lies somewhere to the south. This local do-gooding doesn't seem to be getting me anywhere Archlord-wise, but I'm nearly level two – so poster campaigns and leaflet distribution must kick in soon.



**12:54** Run! Run, Batsphinx run! Fancy-free and full of excited giggles, Batsphinx and her scantily-clad bottom run fetchingly through the glades. Music scored by the London Symphony Orchestra accompanies the flap of her sexy skirt.



**13:23** After half an hour of running through valleys, and having met a monosyllabic beta-tester with a blue baby, the absence of the fortune-telling sister is apparent. Surrounded by goblins in red jelly cubes and tons of high-level six-armed mermaids, I die a terrible and surreal death.



**13:25** It appears that when Bosren was talking about 'to the south', he was actually talking about a spot 50m across the courtyard, that he was apparently too lazy to cross himself. Too lazy to see his own sister standing 50m away! And I died for him! My blood boils.



**13:31** If this is what political power brings in the world of *Archlord*, then I decide I want none of it. It's a breeding ground of corruption and official ineptitude. Wanting to strike out against this thankless machine, I visit the beauty therapist and buy myself a pair of donkey ears.





Vista will contain pretty mountains...



...And it's apparently being designed as a friend to all PC gaming.

# WHAT DOES VISTA MEAN FOR YOU?



Will Windows Vista be a revolutionary OS or just another Microsoft ploy to get your cash? *Martin Korda* investigates...

**P**C GAMING IS dead. You must have heard that before. It's a phrase that's been bandied about for years by doom-mongers panicked by the release of every new next-generation console, stretching as far back as the SNES. And yet, despite the myriad of competitors threatening to bring PC gaming to its knees, PC gaming still seems to be very much here, alive, kicking and - in a few short months' time - about to take what Bill Gates claims is its most significant technological leap in over a decade: the oncoming storm of Windows Vista.

This new operating system is due for release towards the end of the year, and is part of Microsoft's grand design to bring PC gaming back into the mainstream. The idea behind it is to re-establish the platform as a genuine and accessible alternative -

and in certain areas, companion - to console gaming.

## BACK ON TOP

Vista is set to spearhead this initiative, with the operating system shipping in five different guises in an attempt to meet every PC owner's specific needs. It's also promising to combine all of the utilities from previous versions of Windows into one package, providing you with PC-to-TV connectivity, handwriting recognition support and home entertainment system capabilities, as well as allowing you to milk all available drops of power from your 64-bit processor for the ultimate gaming experiences.

"Windows Vista will be Microsoft's biggest product release since Windows 95," explains Rich Wickham, director of Games For Windows, Entertainment

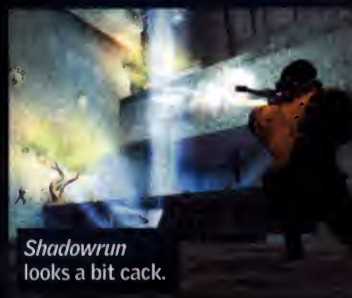
and Devices Division at Microsoft.

"Windows Vista will improve the underlying platform. It will be easier to install, find and run Windows games, and the new graphics driver model will ensure better stability and performance," he says.

## COME THE REVOLUTION

While Vista is aspiring to be an all-encompassing operating system, Microsoft are also planning to use it as a launching pad to propel PC gaming to new heights and, they hope, herald a revolutionary new era for the platform.

"We're treating Windows like a games platform and there's a bunch of things that go into that," comments Wickham. "First off, Vista is a great technology for gamers. DirectX 10 is going to push the limits of graphical fidelity and your experiences beyond



Shadowrun looks a bit cack.



Sunset: calmness in wallpaper form.







Can beauty make us love Bill?



Alan Wake loves Vista and Vista alone.



Oh no! More Windows!

whatever you've seen before. More people than ever are going to start seeing the PC as a gaming platform, as every Vista PC will be a very capable gaming machine. That's going to open up doors on the platform that were never open before."

So just how are the men from Seattle claiming that Vista will improve your gaming experiences? Well, for starters, the new operating system should make it far easier to find and access your games. This is thanks to a new Start Menu feature called Games Explorer, which will allow you to see at a glance exactly what games your PC has installed, and access them with a single mouse click.

"When it comes to game installation and playing a game, we want to build each game into the core of Vista so you can find the game really easily, and

access all the data as easily as you would on a console," explains Wickham. "If you look at a console's installation process where you can immediately play something or have a game-like experience, you have to ask yourself why we don't have something like that on the PC. Well, that's something we'll be addressing with Vista."

## GENERATION X

Perhaps the system's most significant (and controversial) new feature will be the launch of DirectX 10, the massively anticipated next-generation graphics driver that's promising to propel PC visuals back up the gaming ladder of prettiness, but which will only be available on Windows Vista. What that means is a hefty outlay for you if you want to enjoy cutting-edge PC visuals, an expense usually reserved for a new

graphics card. "DirectX 10 is only planned for Windows Vista," confirms Wickham. "The revolutionary change in the Windows Vista Display Driver Model means that DirectX 10 and Windows Vista are very closely linked."

So will Vista be worth the extra expenditure? Well, yes and no. While it's easy to see Vista's release as a cynical money-making ploy, and while most games utilising DirectX 10 will still be playable on Windows XP with DirectX 9, it's also worth remembering that progress always comes at a cost. And if DirectX 10 delivers on its exhaustive list of revolutionary new features, then the extra outlay should be worth every penny. If not, there could be mass riots outside Microsoft's Seattle offices.

DirectX 10 is being vaunted as the best gaming graphics platform of all time, allowing

## PC-BOX 360

Showdown - at last!



Are you ready to take the 360 challenge?

The argument about whose gaming machine is superior will soon be at an end thanks to Microsoft's push to integrate Vista and Xbox 360 games. The new operating system will allow you to jump online and play games against 360 owners, and converse using voice communicating and text messaging.

One of the first games to incorporate this feature will be *Shadowrun*, the FPS based on the much-loved RPG franchise that failed to ignite much enthusiasm at this year's E3. Still, you and up to 15 other PC or Xbox 360 players will be able to battle for supremacy in online swords-and-sorcery battles.

Perhaps the most pertinent question in all of this is whether or not PC users will have an unfair advantage, due to the superior movement control offered by a mouse/keyboard set-up. "The development team is working constantly to balance the experience of playing with a controller on either Xbox 360 or Windows, versus playing with mouse and keyboard," promises Microsoft's Rich Wickham. "We believe gamers will be very happy with the results, as well as with the opportunity to battle it out with their friends across platforms and mouse/keyboard versus controller." Call us cynics, but we'll believe it when we see it.

**PROTECT**

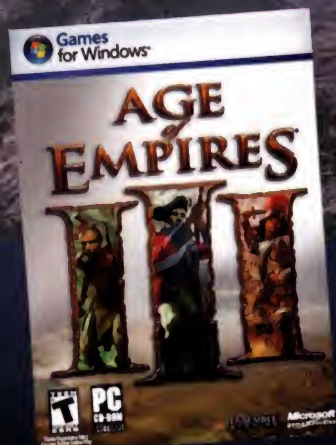
Sam Fisher

D2334223424

Feb 5, 2008



Microsoft Flight Simulator X: exciting stuff.



**"Though the next round of next-gen consoles has temporarily stolen the limelight, we'll continue to see the most technologically advanced gameplay on PC"**

Chris Taylor, founder and creative director, Gas Powered Games

Hellgates will be springing up in Vista as well as London.

programmers far greater control over a PC's hardware capabilities – using and abusing them to their full potential. Microsoft claim that developers will also be able to maximise the power of the GPU to far greater effect than before and as a result, create vastly advanced AI and larger, more complex worlds for us to explore.

Colour depths and video streaming are also promised to be infinitely superior to DirectX 9's, while characters will possess an incredible level of detail, allowing them to display human emotions with far greater realism than ever before. What's more, all of this graphical splendour will apparently come with shortened loading times to boot. It all sounds great on paper but how soon and to what extent these new features will be implemented in

the first generation of Vista-only games is yet to be seen.

One thing is for certain, though; if Vista manages to live up to its billing, then it looks like it'll provide an unprecedented leap forward in graphical quality and processing power for games driven by DirectX 10. "Users playing games programmed to take advantage of DirectX 10 will enjoy experiences beyond what people today consider to be next-generation," Wickham promises confidently.

## GEARING UP

It's encouraging to note that Vista's capabilities are also raising the pulse of many of the world's leading games developers. "We're excited about the accessibility and usability options for gaming that Vista promises," says

Randy Pitchford, president of Gearbox Software. "We're also very encouraged by Microsoft's intent to redouble their attention to the PC as a gaming platform. At Gearbox, we're more excited than ever about PC gaming. Microsoft's attention to PC gaming with Vista allows us to put even more attention towards it than we have in the past."

And with a raft of games in production set to harness both Vista and DirectX 10's awesome powers – including Crytek's dazzling *Crysis*, plus *Hellgate: London*, *Age Of Conan*, *Company Of Heroes* and *Microsoft Flight Simulator X*, with many more to follow – it seems that Gearbox aren't the only major developer getting excited by the potential of the new operating system. Meanwhile, PC gamers could

perhaps neatly sidestep caring about *Shadowrun* or the ancient *Halo 2* being exclusively tied to Vista – but the very thought of missing out on Remedy's Vista-only *Alan Wake* makes the blood run cold.

## NIMBY?

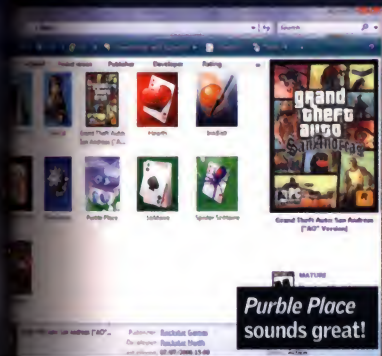
Vista has also courted controversy among PC gaming enthusiasts due to its symbiotic relationship with the Xbox 360 (see 'PC-Box 360', page 31), which will allow owners of the two platforms to challenge each other in head-to-head online confrontations via Windows Live Anywhere. In a move that may or may not further exacerbate the console wars, this is the first time such integration has been attempted. "Live Anywhere will connect you to your games, your friends, your



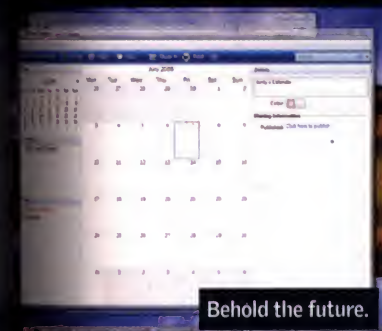




Age Of Conan will be able to run sumptuous DX10 visuals.



Purple Place sounds great!



Behold the future.

entertainment, anytime, anywhere," promises Rich Wickham.

Indeed, Windows Live Anywhere will have multiple uses. Not only will you be able to find your friends online via a constantly updated list – making communication easier and more intuitive than ever before – you'll also be able to access music videos and movie trailers in the same way that you would via an Xbox 360.

## WALK THE WALK

Based on Wickham's claims, Vista is looking like it could be the single most significant and exciting innovation that PC gaming has seen for a very long time. It's a sentiment shared by Chris Taylor, founder and creative director of Gas Powered Games. "The future of PC gaming is very bright, and though the next round of next-gen consoles has temporarily stolen the limelight, we'll continue to see the most technologically advanced gameplay on the PC. Vista

## The big push

Microsoft set to push in-store PC presence



Microsoft's vision for PC gaming's retail presence.

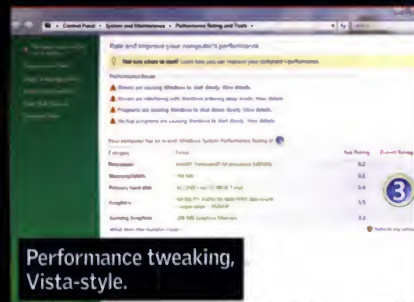
For years, PC gaming has been stunted by an increasingly meagre in-store presence, but that's all about to change. To coincide with the release of Vista, Microsoft are planning an aggressive in-store marketing drive to promote the PC as a viable, exciting and accessible gaming platform.

Not only are the software giants planning to radically increase the shelf space dedicated to PC games throughout the world, they're also planning to allow us to experience PC games first-hand in shops, just like we can with Xbox and PlayStation titles. In-store PCs will be set up to showcase the latest games and allow you to try before you buy.

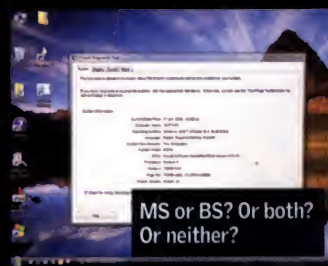
"We want to make the PC retail experience much more enjoyable," explains Microsoft's Rich Wickham. "We're building these outstanding retail experiences and making displays that look like the Xbox retail sections. We're going to have PC game boxes facing outwards, and we're going to spend a lot of time and money to do it. Mr Gates has lots of things to do and he doesn't show up for just anything, so it was a real signal of intent that he showed up for our announcement about our plans for Games For Windows." With big Bill onboard, how could they possibly fail?

will play a key role by removing the requirement to have a large degree of technical knowledge, which is key to allowing the platform to soar to the next level and allow the games to have a mass-market penetration."

With leading developers excited by and supporting this new operating system, and with an aggressive in-store marketing and sales campaign projecting the PC as a serious competitor to Xbox 360 and PS3, it's starting to look like the PC could be about to realise its potential as the most powerful and exciting gaming platform of them all. Should Vista deliver on its promises, it'll not only silence the doom-mongers, it'll signal to the gaming world that the PC is back. And, let's not forget, it'll make bucketloads of cash. **WIN**



Performance tweaking, Vista-style.



MS or BS? Or both? Or neither?





# DOVE-ING AND DIVING

**Chow Yun-Fat glowers over two smoking gun-barrels of sheer hype-frenzy for *Stranglehold***

www.midway.com | ETA: 2007

**STANDING BEHIND MIDWAY** producer Alexander Offerman as he lays out bloody death for Hong Kong gangsters in action epic *Stranglehold* would be mildly disturbing, were it not for the wall of anticipation attached to the project.

"We have special hit locations – if you hit a guy right in the balls, he will react differently to if he got hit in the heart," says Offerman excitedly. "You can take him out after that. You can also shoot a guy in the knee and he'll drop to the ground and keep shooting at you. Eventually he bleeds to death and then he'll be dead." What a lovely (talented) man.

The pseudo sequel to John Woo's action masterclass *Hard Boiled*, *Stranglehold* has

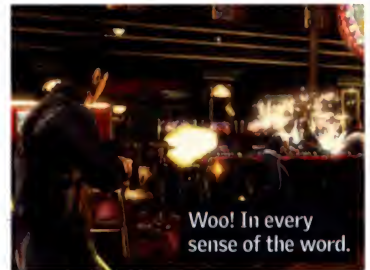
a similar plot in that it deals with two rival Hong Kong gangs – one the old-guard triad, and the other trying to steal their turf.

"The one that's trying to take over kidnaps the leader of the other gang's daughter," explains Offerman helpfully, as he shoots someone off a balcony with a shotgun. "She's actually in hiding in Chicago when they find her and kidnap her." And guess what? That daughter is only the ex-girlfriend of Tequila (the protagonist played by Chow Yun-Fat).

Cue opening shoot-outs in Hong Kong in locations like floating casino and restaurant complexes, a middle section in Chicago that contains a posh penthouse level that gets blown to bits, and a climactic return to Hong

Kong that simply must contain a shoot-out in a church. And some doves.

With Woo directing cut-scenes and his film team storyboarding and scripting the whole shebang, it's a film nerd's dream. And a *Max Payne* fan's dream too, we might add – as Offerman is only too aware. "There are *Max Payne* fans who say, 'It's like *Max Payne* – but better? Awesome!'" exclaims the *Stranglehold* producer as he leaps in slo-mo over a table and shoots a hoodlum in the head with a pistol. "I think it's a total lend to have the *Max Payne* comparison, so I don't shy away from it." A bullet-time rival after all this time? Payne will be mumbling nonsensical soliloquies atop a few flaming skyscrapers over this one...



Woo! In every sense of the word.



Boats: friends of ill-doers everywhere.

# INFERNAL'S AFFAIRS

**Time to start up the *Infernal* combustion engine**

www.infernal-game.com | ETA: Q4 2006

**AFTER ITS RECENT** name change from *Diabolique: Licence To Sin* to the slightly less embarrassing *Infernal*, this third-person shooter is actually looking oddly impressive – considering all we'd heard from it before now was the funny noise the DVD made when we twirled it on our desks.

For a start, you play as a top-secret agent (which is the best kind of agent by far) – but get this, you've only been possessed by Satan (or some sort of demon at least) which allows you to both shoot bad guys in the head and use supernatural powers to do amazing tricks. Give whoever thought of this a merit badge.

The best trick, the game's pivotal tour de force, is the ability to teleport around the

place like Nightcrawler from *X-Men*. You simply point at up to three locations you wish to appear in and you're astrally projected between them in a stylised slo-mo sequence, appearing next to enemies and killing them before they even know you're there.

Trouble is, *Infernal*'s coming from a relatively low-key developer (unless you remember *Gorky Zero: Beyond Honor*), and suffers from slap-you-in-the-face-bad voice-acting and various other rough edges. How many of these issues can be rectified before the game's release is yet to be seen.



"Oh no!" My reticule!"



"It's all because I became a serial addict of the computer game *Civilization*. I played it for three months and then realised I hadn't done any work. In the end, I had to delete all the saved files and smash the CD. It is very unprofessional of me. I had to ask for an extension for the first time, which made me feel just like I was a student again."

Iain Banks, sci-fi author extraordinaire, blames Sid Meier for the late arrival of his latest novel. That excuse doesn't work when we miss deadlines. Even when the Romans do eat our homework.

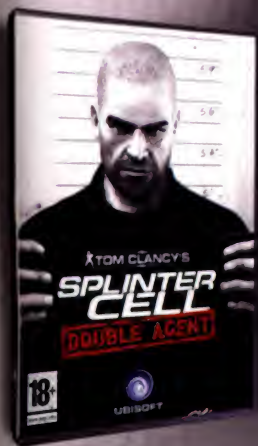
"Did you get the press release I sent you on extreme gaming? You know, bodyboarding, kite-flying that kind of thing..."

Just one of the idiotic PR phonecalls we receive on an hourly basis. For the last time, before we eat our own limbs: WE ARE A GAMES MAGAZINE. We wouldn't even know what outdoors looks like, let alone want to wave a piece of f\*\*\*ing cloth around in it! Argh! ARGH!



# CHOOSE

...WHICH SIDE YOU ARE FIGHTING FOR AT [SPLINTERCELL.COM](http://SPLINTERCELL.COM) **CHOOSE**



## OCTOBER 2006

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UBISOFT

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# THE PROFESSIONALS

Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

**EVERYBODY LIKES TV**, and the one kid at school whose family refused to buy one (does that happen anymore?) might now be very clever and read lots of books, but they still wouldn't be able to hold their own in *Coronation Street* trivia. With this in mind then, Grant Rennell, who works

downstairs from us in the ungainly bunker that is Future Publishing, started banging us on the head whenever our paths crossed his at the vending machine. Why wouldn't we publish a photo of his face and his vociferous opinions on televisions in gaming? Turns out we would...

**THIS MONTH:  
TELEVISIONS**

Expert: Grant Rennell Job: Assistant editor on  
What Satellite and Digital TV magazine  
Expert pedantry: The magic picture boxes of PC gaming



## HALF-LIFE 2

"The lack of a visible aerial connection is puzzling. Presumably the adoption of alien technology has enabled the development of an integrated aerial reception system. The

horizontal lines could be down to interference from other transmitters and indicates that an analogue transmission system may be in use. There's no remote control around and no buttons on the TV either, suggesting you're restricted to watching just the one channel – but at least you can pull the plug. As for the giant Breen-o-vision screens in the rest of the game, outdoor displays have become common in airports and train stations, but holographic displays are a good way off."

**PCZONE**  
★★★★☆  
Propaganda puzzler



## DUKE 3D

"If you've ever watched adult satellite channels with very poor bitrates this will be familiar, although with them at least you can expect more, er, 'action' than you see here. If this is running off a DVD, it

could be faulty or just very poor quality. If this were a plasma screen, a bright static image would run the risk of screenburn – so at least the two frames of animation here would avoid that to an extent. The TV is rather primitive looking (look at those buttons!), but I suppose it's what you'd expect to find in a sleazy location like this."

**PCZONE**  
★★★☆☆  
Unerotic, unconvincing



## MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

"It's conceivable that a hospital might have a flatscreen TV to keep patients entertained while they wait, and 4:3 LCD sets are actually very cheap these days – you can even buy them in supermarkets. It's true that there are no visible buttons, but some sets have them running down the side; what's more, there may not be any cable trails, but someone may have taken a drill to the wall. Of concern is the green screen which, if not intended, suggests a possible fault with the Scart connection or worse, a problem in the panel itself."

**PCZONE**  
★★★★☆  
Max-powered



## PREY

"TV reception in the desert would not be too much of an issue using a satellite system providing there were no sandstorms or other sources of interference. However, the two black-and-white channels here suggests the bar owner has let his subscription lapse – and he's too tight to invest in a decent TV. There's a composite video input, so you could plug in a DVD player or console, but there's only one phono input, so stereo sound is a no-no."

**PCZONE**  
★★★☆☆  
Bad um-telly



## THE SIMS 2

"A choice of cable or satellite does not seem to be an option in *The Sims 2*, which doesn't tally with the real world. Wherever it's coming from, the pictures of the cookery and exercise shows that Sim drones feast on are noticeably blocky which could be down to the quality of the transmission, interference (unless they have cable) or the TV itself. Large-screen TVs can really show up poor picture quality. Can you buy a HDTV receiver in *The Sims 2*? Alternatively, you could always try upping the resolution of the game instead."

**PCZONE**  
★★★★☆  
A bit sim-ple

## WINNER: Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne

We thought the design too simple – but no! Grant states categorically that it's a minimalist delight. And so televisions of *Max Payne 2*, home of Captain Baseball-bat Boy and Lords and Ladies, we salute you.

## ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL?

PC ZONE is in search of readers with professional knowledge or anally-retentive knowledge in the following fields, and many more:

\*Spatial Anomalies \*Portable Light Sources \*Crates \*Locksmithery  
\*Burglary \*Psychological Manias \*Dogs \*Monkeys \*Vending Machines

If you want to cast your eye over these or any other PC gaming areas, then email us at [TheProfessionals@pczone.co.uk](mailto:TheProfessionals@pczone.co.uk) and stick your oar in as far as it'll go.





# BACK OF THE NET

"Ball, ball, ball. Footy, footy, footy," claims *Football Manager 2007*

www.footballmanager.co.uk | ETA: October

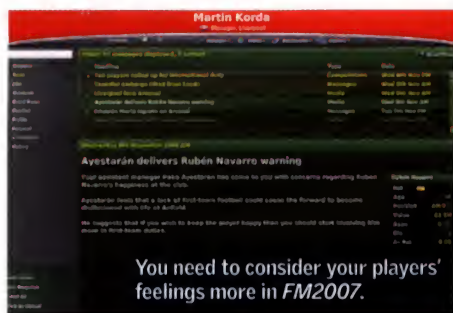
YES, IT'S THAT time of the year again when Premiership football is back on the daily menu and those kings of the management genre – Sports Interactive – roll out the latest iteration of their all-conquering *Football Manager* series. Having had the chance to sample the most recent Beta code, it's clear that this latest version is continuing along the evolutionary development vein of the previous two titles, rather than being revolutionary. With over 100 refinements added since we last schlepped up and down the virtual touchline screaming obscenities at our players, there's plenty of new options here to help bolster your managerial tenure.

With user-friendliness at the forefront of the game's design, *FM2007* already feels far easier to navigate than its predecessor, while countless loading-screen tips have been woven in to help you discover the game's finer points without having to wade through any 100-page manual. *FM2007* also appears to process matches far more quickly than before, meaning we didn't have to stare at the game for hours while it generated thrillers like no-score-draws at Accrington Stanley vs Bognor Regis Town.

Also revamped is the level of player and press interaction, with badgering journos now grilling you on a variety of subjects and players making their feelings known in no uncertain terms. Sadly however, in the build we played, the team-talk option still feels somewhat tacked on and confusing.

Another overhaul is board involvement, with the suits now able to accept player offers that are too good to refuse without consulting you first, though conversely, you can also find yourself rolling in hills of money should a wealthy businessman take over the club.

The sheer volume of new features is certainly impressive and *FM2007* feels like an even more immersive and detailed experience, despite a few areas still requiring some polish. Rest assured, we'll bring you a definitive review soon.



It's been announced that the **games industry** is not full of publishers **skipping through rose gardens** and tying daisy chains in each others hair, but instead packed with **money-grubbing bastages**. The announcement, made by all gamers everywhere, came with the affirmation by Atari that their broken *GTA* clone *Driv3r* was a **bag of wank**. Atari's sales and marketing VP, **Nique Fajors** this month described the game as "a **half-baked product that was pushed out the door for revenue reasons**," but stopped short of physically returning crumpled banknotes to gamers **conned into buying said game**, or even getting on his knees and whipping himself until the floor **ran red with half-baked blood**. Fajors then claimed that in future, Atari intended to take on development staff who feel "disgust with losing and disgust with being mediocre." It's now widely expected that Atari will have **stopped being mediocre by late 2007**.

**Illinois**, a place in America, has been instructed to give **half a million dollars** to the **power of gaming**. After a foolhardy attempt to ban violent videogames (one of a string of attempts to curb violence including a memorable motion that sought to ban lewd whistling and the concept of 'night-time' due to the statistically higher level of murders that took place therein), the State of Illinois has been left with **egg on their stupid Illinoid faces**. Judge **Matthew F Kennelly**, United States district judge for the Northern District of Illinois and **king of all Illinoids**, put a veritable smackdown on a **GTA-hating law** with a permanent injunction and a ringing endorsement of that amendment that all Americans **love so much**. "If controlling access to allegedly 'dangerous' speech is important in promoting the positive psychological development of children, in our society that role is properly accorded to **parents and families, not the State**," said Judge Kennelly, before convening the trial of an overweight mother whose **'bitch-ass, no-good sister'** had been 'sleepin' on ma couch all Fall' and who 'owes me \$50 rent, and owes me RESPECT' in front of a live studio audience.

**"Atari described *Driv3r* as 'a half-baked product pushed out of the door for revenue reasons'"**



10,000 units per battle is the aim. Same as before, but they look loads better.

"What colour is your earring again?"

The Aztecs and Mayans won't be a walkover.

IT'S TOO TOTAL, LIKE TOTALLY..

# MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

**Richie Shoemaker** saddles up with the RTS series that's still setting the pace

DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly PUBLISHER Sega WEBSITE [www.totalwar.com](http://www.totalwar.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... 170

## THE LOWDOWN

Dripping with authenticity. The peasants will no doubt be revolting. ✓

Goes beyond the battlefield like never before. ✓

And the battles look amazing, of course. ✓

Hundreds of missions that bring real advantages to your faction. ✓

Martin will probably be reviewing it. ✗

**H**ELLO. YOU MAY remember me from such reviews as *Shogun: Total War* and *Medieval* – the multiplayer experience (issue 122, check it out – it *rawks*). Both great games, reviewed with typical subjective fervour. I would have reviewed the others too, if it wasn't for that Martin F\*\*\*ing Korda muscling in on my territory.

The Creative Assembly know the score. They've had it up to *here* with him too. On being asked if someone from *PC ZONE* could come down to play *Medieval II*, they simply said: "So long as you don't send Korda." Apparently he swans around like he owns the place, drinks all the Yop! from the fridge and bear-hugs everyone in sight. So I'm here instead, playing through the early stages of a campaign game and eager to reclaim the throne, as it were, while Korda sits at home playing indie garbage. Ha!

Sitting down to play *Medieval II*, even in the sterility of CA's meeting room, is like falling into your bed, only with fresh sheets and a bigger, softer, fluffier duvet – with knights on the cover, obviously. It just feels comfortably right. The first *Medieval*

may seem like a game from the Dark Ages in comparison, but it had authenticity pouring of its ears and over its gorget (neck armour, duh). That authenticity has been carried over – indeed it's been built up further – with the variety in terms of units, their fluttering banners and new map furniture making the series come alive like never before.

## YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL

You can see that perfectly well yourself though, thanks to the accompanying marketing-approved images. And yes, it really looks that good. CA can be proud at what they have achieved in terms of the graphical finery on show, but such beauty can only impress for so long because you're not going to conquer much if you spend the battles watching your knights doing fancy *Soul Calibur* moves.

While *Medieval II* will rock your world because it looks bonza (it was largely made at CA's outback studio), what will really make fans announce in the pub that 'actually, this is the best yet by heaps' is down to a couple of what may seem like minor features.

One is the massive influence that your piety will have on your relations with neighbours, more so than in the previous game, with favoured cardinals able to affect papal policy to a certain extent. In order to get into his good books, however, you have to accomplish missions for His Holiness. Missions will even come from traders, spies and other guildhall leaders too. Impress your local chapter of assassins, and they may be tempted into relocating their European HQ to your capital, thereby allowing you to train the überest killers in Christendom. There's certainly more to do this time around than simply shuffle army counters around the place.

## SKIP TO THE END

My favourite feature, and one I didn't have time to explore fully, was one that should address a problem that has been inherent in all the *Total War* games. Veterans know the one, where you're two-thirds of the way across the map, your enemies are scattered and really you're just sweeping a broom around. Games rarely ended in thrilling climaxes unless you were on the losing

ETA  
**OCT**



## THE STORY SO FAR... THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

### MONGOLS

The baby-eating Mongols invade *Shogun*, introducing Battlefield Ninjas of all things.



2001

### VIKINGS

The Viking Invasion involved a swathe of pillaging Scandinavians. They were a bit angry.



2003

### BARBARIANS

The Barbarian Invasion introduced the Huns and Vandals, and had night-time battles too.



2005

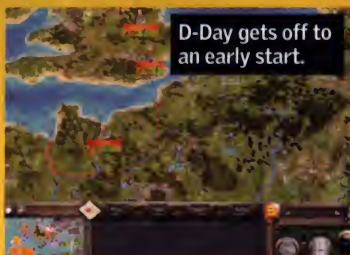
### MACEDONIANS

Alexander is almost an expansion and dirt-cheap. Is this the future for the series?

2006



Lots of options in diplomacy.



D-Day gets off to an early start.



Bet they all have the same pants on too.

## To settle or not to settle?

If not now, maybe later...



There's a CS level in there somewhere...

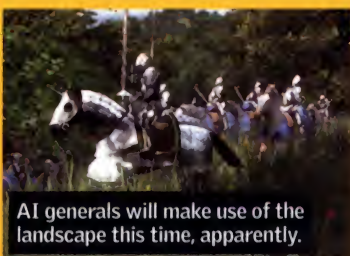
One of *Medieval II*'s 'yeah, so what' features that you might have no interest in is that the tech tree is such that, at some point in the game, you will have to decide whether a settlement should develop into a military fortress or a city. Fortresses, of course, are the places to pick up the best troops and are handy to run away to. Cities, on the other hand, are your economic centres and able only to raise the most basic militia units should conflict come a-knocking. 'Yeah, so what' you may repeat. But 'ah' I retort, 'you can turn a city into a fortress later if need be, or vice versa.' Think about it. Now think some more. Such redevelopment is expensive, but surely you can see the possibilities, hmmm?

## Already this is bigger and better in every way, yet comfortingly familiar and infused with *Total War*-ness

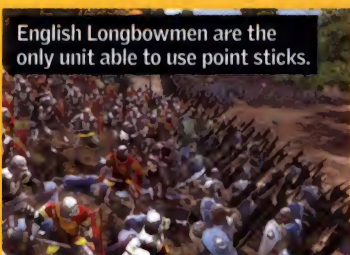
side. Now, with the Americas opening up later in the game – effectively an expansion in itself – there's an endgame that requires new strategies to deal with what will be literally hordes of sun-worshippers happy to die for the cause. In short, *Medieval II* will be a game worth wanting to complete.

To end with the traditional bluster, *Medieval II* looks good, nay it looks *oorsome*! It's probably the best *Total War* ever made, ever. Hollow words? Of course they are. After all, we've still to play a siege battle, a feature CA have yet to get spot-on. And being a pansy, I played in easy mode, so I can't vouch fully for the AI either. I can, however, confidently predict that *Medieval II* will be the improvement we expect it to be, and to improve on a classic is no mean feat. Already this is to *Rome* what the first *Medieval* was to *Shogun*, bigger and better in every way, yet comfortingly familiar and infused with the usual *Total War*-ness of games gone past.

Superlatives beware, Korda will be coming for you with a vengeance. Or I will. Hopefully. Game on. **PCZ**



AI generals will make use of the landscape this time, apparently.



English Longbowmen are the only unit able to use point sticks.



Looks like a day for Lancashire hotpot.



"OK men, party poppers... Now!"





## PCZONE CHARTS

ChartTrack

- 1 **↑ THE SIMS 2**  
Issue 147 82%
- 2 **↑ LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II**  
Issue 167 71%
- 3 **↑ THE SIMS 2: OPEN FOR BUSINESS**  
Issue 166 72%
- 4 **NEW DARKSTAR ONE**  
Issue 172 66%
- 5 **↑ CIVILIZATION IV**  
Issue 162 92%
- 6 **NEW CIVILIZATION IV: WARLORDS**  
Issue 172 79%
- 7 **↓ WORLD OF WARCRAFT**  
Issue 152 95%
- 8 **↑ FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006**  
Issue 162 90%
- 9 **RE COMMAND & CONQUER: THE FIRST DECADE**  
Issue 167 N/A
- 10 **↑ THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE**  
Issue 161 58%
- 11 **↓ RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR**  
Issue 170 80%
- 12 **↓ CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2006**  
Issue 167 69%
- 13 **↓ PREY**  
Issue 171 86%
- 14 **↓ HALF-LIFE 2: EPISODE ONE**  
Issue 170 91%
- 15 **↑ AGE OF EMPIRES III**  
Issue 162 84%
- 16 **↑ THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION**  
Issue 168 95%
- 17 **↑ THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY**  
Issue 153 57%
- 18 **NEW CIVICITY: ROME**  
Issue 171 81%
- 19 **RE MS FLIGHT SIM 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT**  
Issue 133 89%
- 20 **RE ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: GOLD**  
Issue 149 79%



**THE SIMS 2**  
EA's little people sim has finally taken residence at the top spot. It's taken a while and no-one ever thought they'd do it – but well done.



**C&C: THE FIRST DECADE**  
Fueled by hype for the massive third instalment, C&C makes a gallant return to the charts. All hail Kane!



**LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II**  
Shooting back up the charts, this is the proof that dwarves really are better than elves.



**CIVICITY: ROME**  
Rome wasn't built in a day and likewise Firefly Studios' ancient city-builder didn't top the charts in a month either.



Up diddly up up with Oleg Maddox...



...And down diddly down down with Silent Hunter.



The best bits of the ocean draw heavy competition.

# AIR-O-PLANES AND SEA-O-SUBS

Ubisoft takes to the seas and skies

www.ubi.com | ETA: Battle Of Britain: November, Silent Hunter 4: Q1 2007

**AS A CHILD**, choosing your role in an imaginary World War II was easy – stick your arms out and go "brooorgh" and you're a pilot, then wave them around your head and go "ping... ping..." and you're a submarine (and the sofa cushions were no longer clouds but dangerous octopuses). Ubisoft's latest two releases plan to bring this transition to a reality near you, with *Silent Hunter 4: Wolves Of The Pacific's* underwater delights and Oleg Maddox's *Storm Of War: Battle Of Britain* filling the ultra-pedantic sub and plane niches perfectly.

If you enjoy wandering the oceans blue and running on electric engines 160m below the Pacific, stalking a British warship like some clingy metal Plesiosaur (the success of *SH3* showing that you do), then *Silent Hunter 4* will float your U-boat (or sink it, whichever you find more appealing).

Meanwhile, upstairs, ace World War II pilots battle for ownership of trillions of air molecules and the intangible space which they occupy, or airspace, in *Battle Of Britain*. When asked how much resolution Oleg Maddox, creator of *IL-2 Sturmovik*, would like in his cockpits, the man leapt to his feet and started enthusiastically shouting made-up words ending in 'illion' until he collapsed with exhaustion.

With startling detail and absolute realism in every aspect of its conception, *Storm Of War: Battle Of Britain* looks likely to steal the flight sim crown from its predecessor, *IL-2*. And as part of Ubisoft's double act of wartime simulation, the battles of both *Silent Hunter 4's* murky depths and *Battle Of Britain's* vicious skies look set to reignite the world of sitting around and waiting for something interesting to happen while hammering the 'accelerate time' key.



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

# The man who's friends with Mafia hitmen



DAVID FISHER - CREATIVE CONSULTANT ON MAFIA SHOOTER, *MADE MAN*

David Fisher's a bit prolific - he's written over 50 books, on subjects ranging from sports to biochemistry, from humour to stem cell research. He's perhaps best known for his working relationships with the FBI and the Mafia; his latest book, *Good Guys*, has him working with a mob boss and Joe Pistone, aka Donnie Brasco. He is also working closely with Silverback Studios in the making of Mafia shooter, *Made Man*...

**You've sold millions of books over the years... What attracted you to writing a videogame?**

"I've been a writer for 35 years, and I've done a lot of writing about organised crime and the FBI. Acclaim called me one day, wanting to make what they said would be the most realistic Mafia game ever done, and asked if I'd be interested in joining them. I've written a lot about the Mafia and the FBI - I'm the only reporter the FBI have ever let into their crime labs. So, we spent a lot of time hammering out what the game should be, and an amazing amount of that original conception has survived."

**I read you have 'unparalleled access into the world of crime'. How do you go about getting that?**

"The first books I did with Joey Black, the Mafia hitman, were extremely successful. Other criminals read them and liked them. Once, some cops on the New Jersey turnpike stopped a car, and they had all kinds of ammunition and rifles, and a copy of my book. And once, I got a letter from a guy who'd separated from his wife, and he felt she was keeping their kid just to collect the

money. He'd decided to kill his wife, but he wrote to me asking how he could get away with it. I would get letters like this all the time. Most of the time I didn't answer."

**Do you ever see any representations of the Mafia that get it wrong?**

"There's an old saying, if you have to choose between the truth and the myth, write about the myth. And *The Godfather* created the myth of the Mafia, but it became the truth. So if you're not true to that myth - even if you're true to reality - people won't accept it. A lot of things made it all more glamorous than it is, but *Goodfellas* and *The Sopranos* removed the romance. You have to work, you can't make mistakes, you have to take orders and listen to people who you may not like. We try to fit within that for the game."

**Was it difficult, getting inside the mind of a hitman?**

"Well, his brother was a cop, he was a killer. The Mafia was Italian and he was Jewish. So he didn't belong anywhere. He was very small, but with huge shoulders and he liked people to be afraid of him. At dinner once,

with some of my friends, one person asked, 'What would you do if I said I didn't believe you are who you say you are?' And he jammed a fork into this guy's throat, and said, 'I'd ask you to say it again!'"

**Did you ever feel threatened?**

"Never. He was always very protective of me. Once, I was playing basketball in Greenwich Village, somebody started

pushing and we got into a bit of a fight. I looked up and there he was - he just showed up. And I had to stop, because I didn't know what he was capable of doing - I just knew he was protective of me. I know he wouldn't have let it go too far."

**The Sopranos has its fans in the Mafia - do you think they'll enjoy *Made Man*?**

"I think they'll laugh. I think they'll enjoy it!"



## tat Zone

Reel in terror and delight as we belch out ever-widening streams of unwanted merchandise

People often come up to us on the street and say, "Hey, that's a really nice piece of tat you've got there - but what do you do with all of the hideous tat you don't want?" At this point we put our hands on our hips and laugh a hearty laugh. "All of that stuff goes on eBay," we say in our collective, booming masculine voice, "for you to bid on!" And as if by precognitive preparation, the tat is indeed on eBay, for you to bid on. Check for our 'PCZoners' tag on eBay.

Buy our tat at [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)  
All proceeds go to charity. Honest.  
[www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org](http://www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org)



### THIS MONTH'S TAT



**ANOTHER UT2007 T-SHIRT**  
Because somebody paid over £30 for the last one.



**HALF-LIFE 2 CAP**  
This will make you look like hired staff at any HL2-related events.



**DEFCON NUCLEAR SURVIVAL GUIDE**  
A really clever 1960s-style promo booklet.



**COMBINE BASEBALL SHIRT**  
The official shirt of the Valve baseball team!

### THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	<b>BIOSHOCK T-SHIRT</b> A mighty price for a mighty shirt. Still slightly damp after the underwater-lair leakage, mind...	£30.64	13
	<b>PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN TATTOOS</b> Unlike the mythical temporary tattoos of the 1980s, these contain no LSD.	£4.20	7
	<b>CHOP YOUR OWN HEAD OFF CD</b> Well, we were never sure exactly why we were given this anyway. Enjoy it, if you can work out exactly how.	£2.20	5
	<b>THE LAW OF THE PLAYGROUND BOOK</b> With an extra £50 promised for a note from Log. Christ, if we'd wanted a celebrity, we'd have hired Cheggers.	£18.00	7



Hoodies – equally feared in the 12th century.

"Bring out yer dead!"

Clastonbury 1191. The Rolling Stones headlined.

CLOAK AND DAGGER...

# ASSASSIN'S CREED

Jamie Sefton discovers the deadly medieval action-adventure where the crowd can be your friend or foe...

DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER Ubisoft WEBSITE [www.assassinscreed.com](http://www.assassinscreed.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... N/A

## THE LOWDOWN

Brand new franchise from the developer of *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* ✓

Great lead character with fluid animation and extremely violent kill moves ✓

Huge open environments, detailed cities and non-linear missions à la *Oblivion* ✓

Incredible virtual crowd technology ✓

Being developed as a next-gen multi-format title ✗

ETA  
**Q2  
2007**

**N**OTHING IS TRUE. Everything is permitted. This might sound like Sven-Goran Eriksson's justification for his cack-handed England World Cup campaign, but it is in fact the actual guiding motto of a secretive cult of warriors from the 12<sup>th</sup> century who became feared for their tactics of killing political and religious opponents. Taking their inspiration from this murderous medieval sect, *Assassin's Creed* is the latest title from the Ubisoft Montreal team responsible for the rather excellent *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time*.

Already over two years in development – and now confirmed for PC release after the E3 2006 PlayStation 3 announcement – the game is an incredibly ambitious third-person action-adventure set in the Holy Land in the year 1191, using the historical backdrop of the Crusades, with Richard The Lionheart and his Christian soldiers battling against Saladin and his Muslim army of Saracens. Religious conflict in the Middle-East? Pah. Surely they'll sort that out within a millennium anyway...

The anti-hero protagonist in *Assassin's Creed* is Altair, a master assassin who's

disgraced when he fails to kill the Templar leader Robert de Sable, and is demoted to the lowest rank in the Order (presumably where he'll have a desk job involving filing, photocopying and other demeaning assassin administrative tasks). To redeem himself, Altair is given missions by the leader of the Order, Sinan, to kill various corrupt individuals in the Holy Land who are exploiting and prolonging the terrible war situation of the Third Crusade, but he discovers a deadly mystery along the way...

Unlike the whimsical fantasy of the *Prince Of Persia* however, *Assassin's Creed* has a real medieval setting, and instead of just a palace to explore, you now have an entire kingdom. There are three huge cities, each with its own unique atmosphere and socio-political make-up: Acre, a war-torn European-flavoured coastal settlement recently conquered by the Christian Crusaders; Damascus, a desert town featuring dust-blown markets and majestic mosques; and Jerusalem, the multi-cultural melting pot it's always been.

In-between these major cities, rather like *GTA: San Andreas* or *Elder Scrolls: Oblivion*, is wild countryside, with verdant hills, scorching deserts, dense forests and icy mountain regions, hiding away stunning vistas, castle hideouts and secret locations to explore and discover, on foot or on horseback.

## CROWD CONTROL

Although sightseeing is encouraged, the main dagger thrust of any assassin's lot is killing people, and Ubisoft has spent a considerable wedge of development time on the creation of bustling city environments teeming with over 60 NPCs on-screen at once. To complete assassinations, Altair has to work his way stealthily through the crowds, deftly moving past people or even putting a hand out and pushing them out of the way, carefully ensuring that he doesn't alert the potential victim to his presence. Of course, if you prefer the more direct route, you can just barge forcefully through the crowd like a city gent on a tube train or whip out a



THE STORY SO FAR...

**UBISOFT  
MONTREAL**



**Splinter Cell**  
Ubisoft's sneaky spy is still one of the most acrobatic and nimble characters around.



2002

**The Sands Of Time**  
Ubisoft's bouncy prince is pretty nimble and acrobatic too, now we think about it. Hmmm...



2003

**Myst IV: Revelation**  
Bucking the nimble and acrobatic trend, *Myst IV* is more sedate, thankfully.



2004

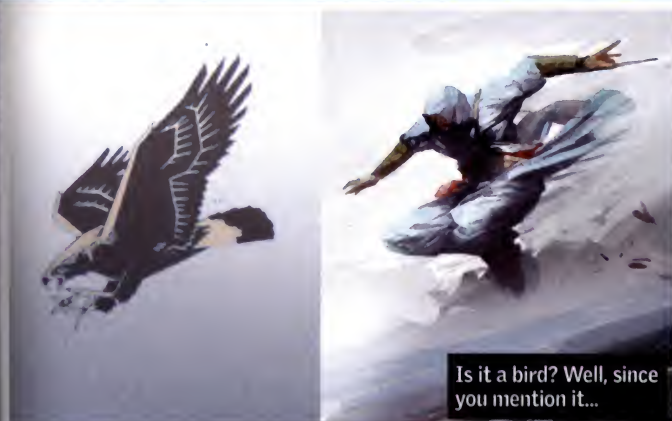
**Assassin's Creed**  
A return to form for Ubisoft Montreal with this acrobatic and nimble tour de force.



2007

## Fly like an eagle

The game's hero bears more than a passing resemblance to a bird of prey...



Is it a bird? Well, since you mention it...

Altair is the ice-cool star killer in *Assassin's Creed*, and talking with Ubisoft reveals that his entire design is modelled on a bird of prey – 'altair' actually means 'the flying eagle' in Arabic, for example. "Our hero will hunt his target down, observe his every move, then strike with a single killing blow," says artistic director Nicolas Cantin. "He's always in control, analysing his environment so he can choose the best course of action, while keeping an incredibly low profile."

Altair's main weapon is a talon-like ritualistic dagger that protrudes from his mutilated left hand, that's missing a finger from his initiation into the Assassin's Order. However, the stealthy murderer also has a cowl that looks like a beak, a cloak that wraps around him like wings and an eagle's combination of brute strength and incredible grace. Finally, and most importantly for his day job, Altair has eagle vision, that focuses on his intended victim while blurring everything else around them.

**Unlike the whimsical fantasy of *POP*, *Assassin's Creed* has a real medieval setting – and instead of just a palace, you have a whole kingdom to explore**

suitable weapon and start hacking your way through the startled throng like a maniac, but the various reactions of the town dwellers could reveal your position to the authorities.

Individuals can just raise a disapproving eyebrow, stare gormlessly or look at you with suspicion, but they can also run away frightened or even turn on you and start a fight, calling on nearby pals to surround you and join in on the thorough beating.

### BROUGHT TO LIFE

If any of the AI-controlled townspeople get hungry, they may visit a stall to get food, or if they're bored, look out for entertainment in the square – each has a role, whether that's a beggar, salesman, bodyguard or soldier, and will act and react to you according to their unique personality. The believable organic world is also brought to life by the various different languages that people can speak, which Altair can translate to hear useful gossip and info on the local area.



"We'd better move. The giant crusader's getting restless."







England's next World Cup team are shaping up well.

We waited ages for Rapunzel to let down her golden hair, but she never did.



If you do manage to get near enough to your intended target to kill at close quarters (sniping is cheating in the Assassin's Order), Altair can use his special concealed blade to deal the fatal blow. Suddenly, time slows down and the action is focused on the two individuals in a very personal and horrific moment. Killing is an honourable and serious profession for the Order – quite the opposite of other games such as *Hitman*, where you'll probably end up dropping someone off a balcony dressed in a clown suit.

## HIDE AND SEEK

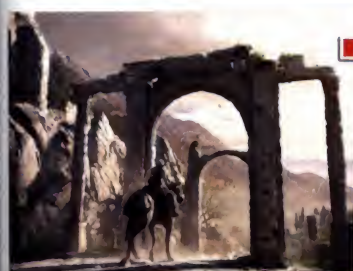
After Altair has killed his prey, he must escape to the safety of his assassin's hideout – no easy feat when you've just sliced an army commander's major artery in a packed town square in front of half-a-dozen angry Christian mercenaries. Choosing to fight means you're usually outnumbered and requires you to time attacks and defensive manoeuvres to outwit opponents, with the battle system helping out occasionally with auto-blocks – although this weakens Altair and ultimately leaves him more vulnerable to fatal blows.

Enemies also won't just keep fighting until they die – if injured, they may decide to flee or beg for mercy, or if you make a run for it, they might actually give chase, resulting in exciting dashes through crowds, down alleyways and



## Constructing the Holy Land

Ubisoft's world takes more than seven days to create...



The process begins with an artist bashing out a bit of concept art that the team can use as reference for the feel of the scene. Lovely painting that.



Next, the computer artists construct a 3D representation of the scene using wireframes. This is actually how our hardware guru Wandy sees the world.



Apparently this is a screenshot showing 'polygons with edged faces', which sounds a bit like the name of a Boards Of Canada album.



Et voila! Digital jiggery-pokery results in a scene with shadows, dynamic lighting and bump-mapping – which will be a bugger for the horse's hooves.

across rooftops until you evade them or lose them in a crowd. You can also hamper a pursuer's progress by completing some of the side-quests, so beggars you've helped may trip them up or burly street merchants could reveal alleyways for you to use before blocking them again after you've made your escape, just like that cool bit in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

### PAINT THE TOWN RED

Not surprisingly, the team that created the first (and some say best) *Prince Of Persia* are again pioneering silky and intuitive movement around the complex multi-level environments, with countless opportunities around the massive levels to latch onto ledges, window sills, poles and other edges to swing up and clamber around. Inspired by the insane urban sport of free-running, Altair's fluid movement constructed from over 4,000 hand-drawn animations (compared with *POP's* 800) allows you to always feel fully in control, making the experience a fun playground rather than a frustrating series of platform jumps ending in a fall to the ground.

Aiding in this feeling of freedom is the control system, which rather than adopting different keys to trigger certain actions, uses them to correspond to Altair's head, arms and feet like a puppet, triggering moves depending on the context-sensitive situation. So for example, if you were making your way down from a building via a series of ledges, you could use your feet to jump down each one, or use your arms to make a grab for the nearest, then swing down to the next in one smooth action.

For even more murderous thrills, you can also combine these moves with your trusty steed, meaning you could ride at breakneck speed through town, rear up to scatter the crowds, stand on the animal's back, leap onto a window

sill, pull yourself up and swing round to where a victim is standing to pierce him with a ritualistic dagger. All in a day's work for your friendly, neighbourhood assassin.

### FUTURE PAST

As Altair progresses through the story in *Assassin's Creed*, he levels up in an RPG-lite way, changing his appearance and getting his mutilated hand (see 'Fly Like An Eagle', p43) on more lethal weaponry. However, there's also an unexpected and fascinating twist, as the whole conspiracy-laden storyline is framed by a person far into the future, who's experiencing the adventure through Altair's eyes. Quite how or why this is happening has yet to be explained, but it introduces the

gameplay device of genetic memory. This means that as you gradually learn places, situations and moves, your ability to survive and heal yourself grows – although again, Ubisoft Montreal is keeping schtum about how exactly this will work in the game.

Aside from all the gameplay nitty-gritty, *Assassin's Creed* just looks fantastic. Using a proprietary Scimitar engine, the development team is using influences from Hollywood movies such as *Black Hawk Down* to create distinctive art direction and atmosphere for the game. Combine the large open areas of *Assassin's Creed* with the detailed buildings

and smoothly-animated intelligent individual AI-driven characters, and you have a potential game-world with more freedom than *GTA*, greater immersion than *Oblivion*, more involving combat than *Dark Messiah* and better stealth than *Thief*.

Yep, there's no wonder that industry legend Warren Spector revealed in this very magazine last month that *Assassin's Creed* is one of the games he's most looking forward to playing, with its intoxicating mix of historical fact and fiction, stealth and action, beautiful environments to explore, cities alive with intelligent NPCs, intuitive movement and brutal combat. All hail the new prince of Persia... **PC7**

"Jabba The Hutt's palace? Just down there on the right, mate."





# SUMMON YOUR ANGER DELIVER YOUR RAGE

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that HACKS OBLIVION to pieces!"  
**PCZONE**

"DARK MESSIAH'S WORLD has been created  
to relentlessly take advantage of the movable,  
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**PCGAMER**

"...THE sense of BARELY-CONTAINED  
CHAOS IS REMARKABLE"  
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# Dark Messiah™

MIGHT AND MAGIC®

ARKANE  
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UBISOFT





**HOT  
SHOTS**

# GUILD WARS: NIGHTFALL

DEVELOPER ArenaNet PUBLISHER NCSoft WEBSITE [www.guildwars.com](http://www.guildwars.com) ETA Q4

**I**F YOU PLAYED through *Guild Wars* and *Factions*, you'll have enjoyed a fine subscription-free MMORPG – or a 'competitive/cooperative online RPG' as the developers would have it. However, if you've ever walked through a supermarket wishing you could be a Dervish or a Paragon in your online life – and who hasn't? – then *Guild Wars* would have disappointed you. Until now. The second expansion campaign for *Guild Wars* introduces the land of Elona, a North African-inspired world being terrorised by a spiteful god and these very two professions! Now every young girl's dream of mastering scythe combat and slashing up some harpies real good seems closer than ever...

7



## The Bigger Picture

### 1 DERVISH YOU WERE HERE

The Kodash area is situated close to the bazaars of Elona, the delightful new province introduced in *Nightfall*. Holidaymakers can enjoy sizzling temperatures all year round, and the local harpies are only too happy to slash you with their hen legs.

### 2 IT'S CALM... TOO CALM

Elona is under the shadow of an outcast god, perhaps from one of *GW*'s earlier instalments. Will it be Dhuum, whose main reason to be evil is that his name sounds like doom? Or will it be Menzies, commander of the Shadow Army, who also finds time to run a chain of newsagents in the '80s?

### 3 SKILL COMMUNICATION

New professions means new skills, so hardcore gatherers of the abilities you grab from the dead will have new elite skills to hunt down. It's time to brush the dust off your Signets of Capture...

### 4 FREE ROAMING

With *Archlord* talking about a shockingly cynical three-tier subscription system, *Guild Wars*' subscription-free approach is utterly laudable. Coupled with character development that also rewards casual play, *Guild Wars* is cheerfully player-orientated.

### 5 PARAGON WITH THE WIND

Sadly, it's the Dervish that uses Wind prayers, and this is the other new profession, the Paragon. So the headline pun, far from being the sophisticated wordplay it could have been, now looks like a fart joke. You deserve better, you really do.

### 6 THREE DERVISHES

Here, we have a Dervish at rest. The blade between the legs explains why Dervishes are famous for their whirling; if they walk normally, they slice their kneecaps off.

### 7 THIS IS ISTAN

There's a strong Moroccan theme running through the Elonian provinces, the whiff of couscous heavy in the air. But you'll also notice a touch of Greek, and Egyptian. Buy *Nightfall* and you'll never have to travel again.





UPFRONT **OI! WHAT'S YOUR GAME?**



# NILSSON

## WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

The future's bright – the future is giant pairs of stomping mechanical combat trousers, says *Richie Shoemaker*

### Who are ya?



**NAME** Marcus Nilsson

**DEVELOPER**

Digital Illusions

**POSITION**

Senior producer

**AGE** Old enough

**GAMES WORKED**

**ON BEFORE**

*Battlefield: Modern Combat* on console

**FAVOURITE GAME**

*ICO* (PS2)





**Q** What's the holy grail for the *Battlefield* series?

**A** "We're not on a quest to have *Battlefield* dominate the world or anything like that. We just want to make great games that people enjoy playing. If you ask me what we'd like to revolutionise, it would be gameplay and that's pretty much what I think we've been doing in the *Battlefield* series already. *Battlefield* was the first game that could integrate infantry and vehicles into a really good online experience – and given that there are going to be more *Battlefield* products, we're going to look hard at how we can make better games."

**So how will you make *Battlefield 2142* better?**

"Well, I would say that character persistence and community are key factors. It's not just about getting the game out there anymore – it's about how we organise ourselves around the game. We need a quality launch, a quality service, good communication – to make sure that the feedback is listened to, dealt with and communicated. Of course, it's very easy to talk about it, but the hard part is to prove it, to prove that we're 100% behind *Battlefield* in terms of post-release support."

**Are you saying you've been a bit crap then?**

"No, it's not that we're necessarily bad – we're not – but there is a very vocal minority on the forums who say 'EA are crap' and 'DICE are lazy', but they're all probably playing the game every day anyway. We have minor problems, sometimes we have big problems, but minor problems are not what people should write about. Maybe they should write about why they're playing *Battlefield* every day. But that's human nature – you have a vocal minority and a silent majority."

**1942 favoured vehicles, while *BF2* was very infantry-friendly. What about *2142*?**

"We need to keep the importance of the vehicles in there because that's what makes the series unique. Infantry in *BF2* proved to be a very good experience – there were infantry-only maps and we're capitalising on that again. We're making it even more immersive too: when a Battle Walker walks by the ground trembles – it's stuff like that which drives the enjoyment of playing as an infantry character. However, we're focusing as much on the vehicles. When someone's in the Battle Walker, he'll own infantry unless you're very smart, in a squad and working together to take him out. In *2142*, we're merging *1942* and *BF2*, but we're also having levels that are designed to be for infantry, as well as ones designed for heavy vehicle use. We have different aims for different levels – the mix is far more varied."

**How about the single-player AI?**

"That's been quite a lot of work actually, as we now have vehicles with legs and we've had to get the AI to understand that – it's like having a huge soldier walking around. But the single-player experience is going to be quite similar to *BF2* in terms of maps and bots – the only obvious addition is a co-op mode. Single-player will be a lot of fun and a good way of training, and will be more rewarding than in previous games, but it's not a full-blown story mode."

**As it uses the same 3D engine, is it fair to assume *2142* will be the kid brother to *BF2*, as *Vietnam* was to *1942*?**

"No, that's not fair. First of all, this whole same engine thing is just not true. *BF2142* has an evolved engine. There was code from *Codenamed Eagle*



The guy on the right's watch has been damaged. He's not happy.

**"We're not on a quest to have *BF* rule the world – we just want to make great games people enjoy"**

in *BF2* and there's code from *BF2* in *BF2142* – that's just the way it always is. Engines evolve, you don't just throw everything away and start from scratch. We've replaced the rendering, but we have the same network engine from *BF2*. Actually, for the gamers that like to play online, this is probably the best engine out there. There are highly improved visuals, but it's also far more stable. The code is naturally better because it's been worked on for so long. The server browser is 600% faster, UI navigation is easier, connecting is a one-screen process.

"With regard to *Vietnam*, if you want to consider it a sort of *Battlefield 1.5*, that's fine, but *2142* is going to much more than a v2.5 because so much innovation has gone into it. For one, we have a brand-new game mode that's more objective-based. Then we have the persistence around the player, which will change how you equip yourself and this also changes the momentum of the battle."

"I've got nobody to play with!"



"Chase me! Chase me! Hooray!"



**MARCUS NILSSON**

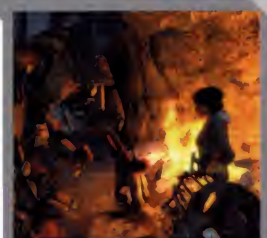
**Where he turns for inspiration...**



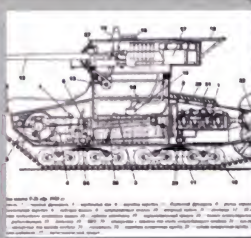
Now that's a mothership.



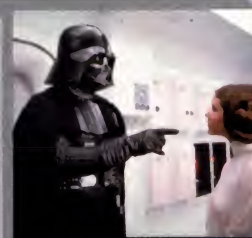
Boxes aren't great cover.



**FPS:** He plays a lot of shooters (for obvious reasons), and admits *Half-Life 2* is a favourite.



**BOOKS:** Nilsson admits a penchant for technical manuals. Just like this interesting-looking one.

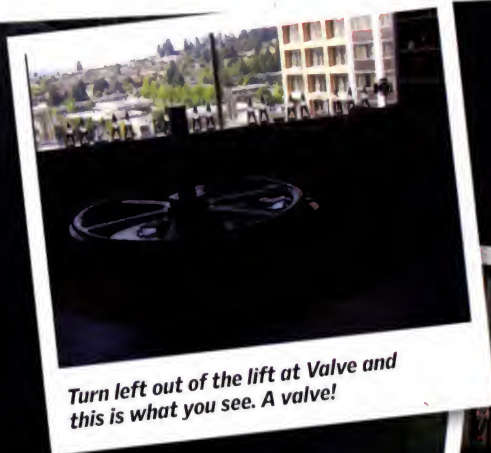


**STAR WARS:** That bit when Vader enters the Rebel ship. Nilsson wants that moment in *BF2142*.



**BEER:** "A drink or two with my design colleagues usually straightens out a few question marks."





Turn left out of the lift at Valve and this is what you see. A valve!



Valve creature creator Ted Backman shows off his evil Hunter creation.

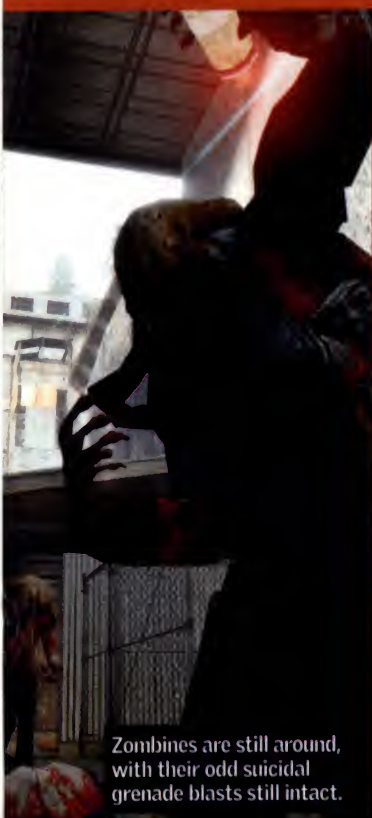


The Hunters work in packs of three, tracking you through the wilderness.

# THE GREAT BIG VALVE MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR



*Will Porter stumbles around Freeman's pad and steals an exclusive look at Half-Life 2: Episode Two, crisps and sweets...*



Zombines are still around, with their odd suicidal grenade blasts still intact.

**I**WOULD HAVE asked whether I was in the right place, but the 20 tubs full of free, brightly-coloured junk food had pretty much given the game away. Any lingering doubt had faded by the time I'd seen the crowbars on the wall and the giant wheeled valve in the middle of the room. The staff wearing *Half-Life* T-shirts in the lift had also provided a strong clue. Then, minutes after a warm handshake and invitation to dive into the 18 different varieties of coronary represented in the snack bar, I'm due back in the barren lands of *Half-Life 2* with only a capsule of orange Tic Tacs for comfort.

"*Episode Two* picks up right where *Episode One* left off, with you and Alyx on the train escaping the city before the Citadel blows up," explains project lead David Speyrer as we stalk through the winding halls of Valve HQ and I fiddle with the exit hatch on my plundered bounty. "You're racing to deliver the information packet that you stole from the Citadel to an enclave of scientists who are up in the wilderness north of City 17. The Combine are in disarray – they're scattered, so are regrouping and moving in your direction."

Then, in a corner office of Valve's high-rise abode I come across exactly what will

be chasing you through the rural valleys, forests and wide-open spaces of Valve's futuro-Eastern Europe – the Hunter.

"We wanted something that was like the Strider in that it's a synthetic Combine thing," explains Valve creature creator Ted Backman as he waves his hands over a clay rendition of the latest addition to the alien menagerie. "It can do lots of cool non-human movements, it can be dynamic and fight you in ways that a soldier couldn't, but also it's a lot smaller scale than an actual Strider – entering into buildings, chasing you through tighter terrain and relating to you in more of a intimidating, in-your-face, large way."

## HAVE FEELINGS TOO

Designed to sniff you out, hunt you down and generally terrify, one of the Hunter's key features is the way that Valve are working out ways for you to read its emotions through the animation of its wild roving eyes, much in the way that Dog's feelings could be told through the dilation of his pupil or the flapping of his floppy bits. If they're inquisitive then you'll know, if they're angry then

you'll definitely know – and if they're frightened (which you won't see that often), then their gaping evil optics will be all aflutter in the knowledge of their impending doom. Clever stuff for something that doesn't have a face.

I'm then whisked into the presence of Dario Casali, *Half-Life* level designer and surprisingly the most British man on earth, to admire the chase. Hunters work in a similar way to the raptors in the less shit *Jurassic Park* movies, constantly in communication with each other through a series of odd hoots and relentlessly galloping after you through field, outhouse and dinosaur-theme-park kitchen.

"They're really fast-moving and they work as a pack," picks up Speyrer as Casali hurls physics items at them. "There are generally three Hunters to a pack, and they quickly divide up into two that try to flank and catch you in the crossfire with their plasma beams, and a third that will run up and try to melee attack you." Meanwhile, an embattled Casali picks up the leg of a recently deceased Strider with his gravity gun and knocks seven shades





Your Vortigaunt buddy will be particularly adept in Antlion combat.



Games and knives: a perfect match. Just don't tell the Daily Mail.



The Combine are out to get you by land, air, and in all probability, sea.

## Mystic Will predicts...

Blatant thinking-out-loud on the happenings of *Episode Three*



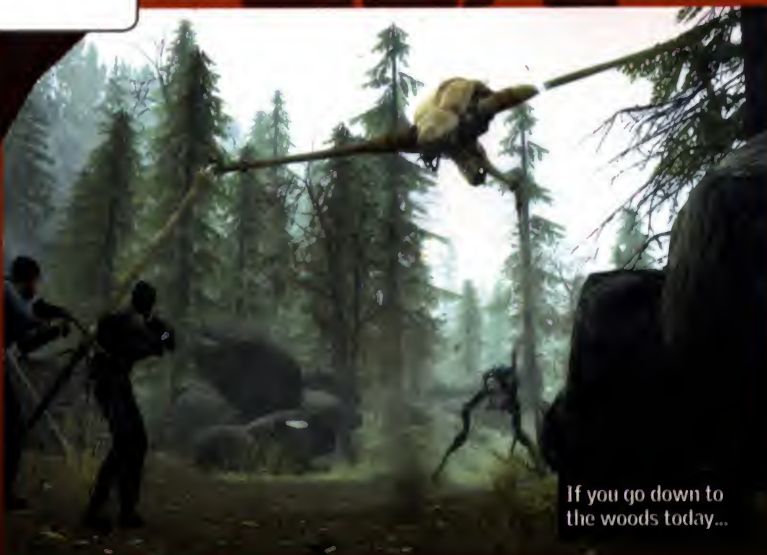
Mossman: wrapped up warm.

So all the action we've seen stars Vorts, Alyx and Kleiner – there's no Mossman to be seen. But the Lando of City 17 is definitely up to something – we saw her in that video transmission when we were stealing the information package from the Citadel. I reckon *Episode Three* will take place wherever she's gone – there's tons of stuff excised from the original *HL2* template due to time concerns like Weather Control stations, research ships and arctic bases. And Gordon is *definitely* heading in a northerly direction. And that's a very thick coat Mossman's wearing. I predict a chilly conclusion to this triptych of mysterious mystery.

out of his pursuer with it, all to a delighted chorus of: "Yeah! Kill it with mum's legs!" They're a lovely bunch are Valve.

## YOU'RE BUSTED

Said Strider, more to the point, had been taken out by the latest entry in the long list of *Half-Life* combustibles: the Strider Buster. Not entirely a new weapon, in that it's picked up and lobbed by the trusty gravity gun, it's a way of getting down and dirty among the Striders – the aim being to attach it to a lumbering tripod's forehead before slotting a bullet deep within it and watching the



If you go down to the woods today...



Kleiner, like any good scientist, always keeps a biro handy.

Antlions: now glow-in-the-dark.

**"The fast zombie can latch onto a vehicle and attack you – just like in those old action flicks"**

Josh Weier, engineer, Valve

Striders legs cartwheel away from its burning shell. In its present placeholder state, the Strider Buster looks like a pumpkin, another sign perhaps of *Episode Two's* rural connections, but it's quite an appetising battle dynamic – especially since its presence means that battles with a large number of Striders (rather than vanilla *HL2's* maximum of a paltry two) can now be brought into play.

## SMASH 'N' GRAB

But there's more to be seen, even if a dash down to destruction bod Gray Horsfield's office (the man previously charged with the more tumbly parts of *The Lord Of The Rings* flicks) is unfortunately rainchecked due to his computer's stubborn refusal to turn itself on. Casali's machine is thereby

re-commandeered to demonstrate the new cinematic physics tech that the ex-WETA man has brought to the Freemanian fold.

Casali wanders around inside a typical *HL2* dwelling smashing the windows, before calling in a scripted Strider to blow it into constituent smithereens. Now normally, the CPU cost of so many physics lumps flying and colliding would render this impressive scene impossible, but now the initial blast (the most engine-shredding part of the whole shebang) can be pre-simulated – with fracture lines painted onto models and simulated force placed in the applicable areas. The result, in Horsfield's cunning Kiwi hands, are some superbly kinetic-scripted destruction sequences.

## FRESH AIR

The most intriguing prospect of *Ep Two* though is the setting – since forests, farmland and countryside generally aren't quite as constricting as the linear paths through barricaded streets and murky industrial complexes in which Freeman has made his name.

Clearly, there'll still be a lot of this, chiefly an underground journey through mines and Antlion burrows, but much of this new instalment will take place in a far broader arena. You'll be really encouraged to get to know the lay of the land that you're covering, journeying back and forth between action hotspots as opposed to relentlessly pushing forward as you did in the Coast and Water Hazard sections of *HL2*; making decisions about

An early piece of Hunter art design.

Presumably Freeman enters the Antlion burrows through this mineshaft.

which skirmishes to take on first and which places to make your stand.

To aid you in this, you're being given a new toy to play with – the creator of which, a youngish cheery chap called Josh Weier, I now perch next to atop a wobbly stool. What I see is essentially a cobbled-together Eastern European Hot Rod, complete with belching engine and a fridge strapped to the back to act as a boot and keep your saw-blades in. But what do you need in a countryside riddled with pan-dimensional villainy?

"Well clearly a cow-catcher to run over zombies is a big important issue for that," nods Weier seriously. "And there's also a little eight-track player sitting in here with some speakers." You can play music as you drive then? "We'll see..." OK, so how will the beasties react to you being in a car?

## SWINGERS

"Well we've made it so that the fast zombie can jump onto the front and latch onto the vehicle and attack you, and when he's on there he's actually physically simulated. It's like in those old action flicks with the guy on the hood – if you're swing back and forth, then he's swinging back and forth."

What's more, any NPC with the right animation will be able to ride shotgun with you, leaping over the bonnet *Starsky & Hutch*-style if they're not on

the passenger side, but your main companion will be a humble Vortigaunt.

"We don't just want him to feel like Alyx has been remodelled, as that's not very exciting," continues Weier, also in charge of the little chap's AI, as he boots up a video of the emancipated Combine slave using a cool dispel attack on a crowd of Antlions and leaving them lying prostrate and confused on their invertebrate backs. "We wanted him to have this mastery of Antlions, because he's from the same place and we wanted him to feel like he knows what he's doing."

Also equipped with a series of wise words, his *HL1* beam attack and the ability to recharge your suit just in the nick of time death-wise, and you've got quite the alien companion in the Vort – very much a *Mac and Me* for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with less corporate sponsorship.

And then, as soon as it began, I find myself back at the snack station. And it's from this that I think that I have the remnants of an American corn-based snack stuck on my teeth when I meet Gabe Newell. And then it's home-time. Well, after I've seen *Team Fortress 2* it's home-time...



# PORTAL

## LOOK AROUND YOU...

Hands on with *Portal* – the total mindf\*\*\* packaged with *Episode Two* and *TF2*

**IT STARTS WITH** you waking up in a plastic prison, staring at your hands and watching a clock slowly ticking down – while an odd computerised voice chirps in the background. It's instantly compelling and, interestingly enough, instantly reminiscent of the *Half-Life* of old. *Portal* begins, and continues, with an air of the HEV training sections and monotone computer announcements of Black Mesa – then propels what's possible in a first-person shooter/puzzler into more dimensions than you're used to.

When the timer ticks down a portal appears, through which I can see myself staring into the portal – a balding man clad in a Guantanamo-orange jumpsuit. From here I move on into the madness.

An hour previous to this, in the real world, I'd met the designers of *Portal*. Six recent graduates from DigiPen university (there's normally seven of them, but one of them was skiving in Vegas), all in possession of toothy grins and remarkably cheery demeanours. An outlook that could perhaps have been expected after being given offices in Valve towers after head-honcho Gabe Newell had seen their final project of their uni courses – the beautifully conceived and designed *Narbacular Drop* (see p118) – and set a remarkable precedent by hiring the entire team with a Sourced-up version on his mind.

Even more amazingly, two of the *Portal* development gang are women – a concept that I, after four years of

Army-issue gun turrets make an appearance to bring a spot of death to proceedings.



The *Portal* team pose for the camera. They look moody don't they?



solid games journalism without having to confront such a terrifying prospect, single-mindedly failed to cope with.

### I CLOSE MY EYES...

Back to the game though, and ten minutes into the game I was standing 50ft above the cold, hospital-white tones of a far distant floor, deep within the research centre in which I was trapped. Over this pit was the exit, its ledge far further away than I could jump. With a left-click I fired a blue portal onto the cold white floor below me, before turning 180-degrees and with a deft right-click, planted a red portal on an intriguingly jugged out panel far above my ahead. Then, reader, I jumped.

Tumbling through the blue portal vertically, I emerged through the red portal travelling horizontally and at the same speed that gravity had previously granted. Flying over the chasm of the pit and skidding through the exit, a computerised voice applauded me, before informing me that both cake and grievance counselling would be available at the end of the test should it be desired.

*Portal* takes *Prey*'s scripted portal dynamic and shoves it so far, far up its

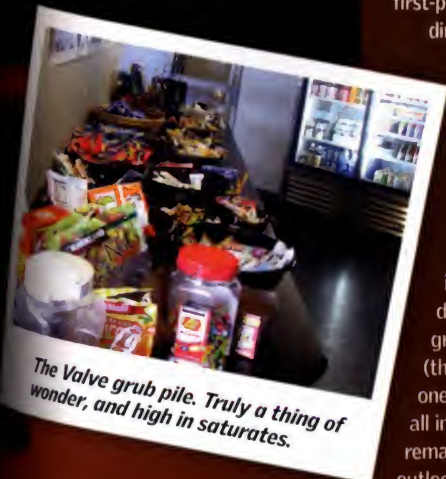
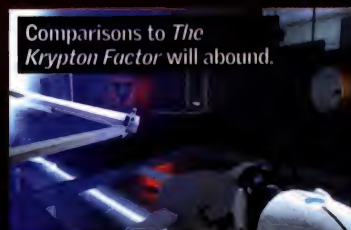
Your brain will hurt, but in a pleasant way.



arse. I mean, in *Prey* could you magic up two portals on the floor then push a box into one and watch gravity bob it up and down in each of them? Has any game given such backhanded witty praise as an unseen AI chirruping "Unbelievable! You <SUBJECT NAME HERE> must be the pride of <SUBJECT HOME HERE>!" as you solve a puzzle?

With Valve writers and musicians onboard to supply a true lonesome feeling of being locked away with only an increasingly deranged computer for company, and some brilliant puzzles covering cubes, abysses, deflected energy balls and physics bent every which way and loose – I can assure you it's set to be an hour or two of joy that justifies any lingering Steam grievances with its presence alone. **PCZ**

Comparisons to *The Krypton Factor* will abound.



The Valve grub pile. Truly a thing of wonder, and high in saturates.



It's essentially Gordon through the Looking Glass.

This Magneto plastic prison affair is where you start from.






**COVER  
FEATURE!**
**NO-ONE HIDES FOREVER...**

# TEAM FORTRESS 2

*Will Porter* rocket-jumps to the swinging '60s and revels in its sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll and deep love of flag capture

DEVELOPER Valve PUBLISHER Valve/EA WEBSITE [www.valvesoftware.com](http://www.valvesoftware.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... 172

## THE LOWDOWN

- Crumbs! It's actually *TF2*! ✓
- Overhaul of the best team-game ever ✓
- Slinky, svelte '60s design ✓
- Clever facades covering espionage bases ✓
- Packaged with *HL2: Ep Two* and *Portal* ✓
- Desire for change might worry the old guard ✗

ETA  
Q1  
2007

**I**N VALVE'S BOARDROOM sit a collection of gigantic steel recreations of *Team Fortress*'s most famed pieces of weaponry – flamethrowers, rocket launchers, mini-guns. "Some guy from Norway made them," muses Valve man Doug Lombardi, before launching into a tale that involves an obsessive Scandinavian metalworker, some signed Valve paraphernalia, several thousand dollars of postage fees and a fair few problems with US customs in the paranoia-fuelled closing months of 2001.

It's the sort of scene that shows exactly how much of a cherished commodity lies within the boundaries of its much-loved CTF maps and, while I'm not sure that you'll have noticed this, it's been a bit backward in coming forward for the last couple of years. "Some people get the impression that we had this kind of blasé reaction after showing *TF2* in '99 – we feel terrible about that," laments Charlie Brown, engineer on a game that's been on the top of the vapourware charts

(beneath the obvious, obviously) since time immemorial. "There are things I've waited for forever and then they don't come out. We can totally sympathise."

To this I give a reproachful look usually reserved for dogs when their owners return from week-long Balearic holidays; the 'I've been locked in a kennel for a week with other dogs and the food tasted funny. I thought you loved me' look of forlornness. To this tragic look, and my brief murmur of, "So what have you been doing since '99?", Brown opens his big box of secrets.

## STEP INSIDE

"Since we showed that initial launch, we've tried about three additional 'experiments' as we like to call them, but none of them felt like a product we were happy to call *Team Fortress 2*. However, there was a bunch of good stuff within each of them, so we skimmed off the good ideas and decided to do further experimentation on those."

So what did these works-in-progress look like? "Well, a lot of the experimentation stayed in the realm you saw back then, more military – they were really more for testing gameplay ideas. If you're talking about more of their stylistic look, we tried three or four ranging from watercolour to a bunch of other stuff. Ultimately, a lot of the experiments we did were really cool, but they didn't feel like *Team Fortress*."

## BLINDED BY IT

And so, around this time last year, Valve saw light at the end of the tunnel, hit the nail on the head and reached a point where many other clichéd sayings are applicable. They thought their gameplay fit – but how should it look? More than any other game, *TF* is about unrealistic weaponry, rocket-jumping and daft physics – a fun, funny team-game.

"So when we sat down," continues Brown, "we decided that instead of actually combating that kind of





Things are about to get heavy.



Why, it's obviously a happy farming commune.



And this is an everyday industrial... Thing...

exaggerated gameplay with a realistic, serious style, we'd embrace it and do something a bit more stylised."

And so now we have cute little gun turrets placed by the Engineer that build themselves in half-animal, half-stickman fashion. We also have a boyish scout speeding around with his head down like the kid in *The Incredibles*, and we have soldiers with a beautiful lumbering plod and legs that tread through the air after a well-placed rocket-jump. They're exaggerated, yet toned, caricatures – and when you introduce physics and ragdolls and you see bodies slipping and sliding around the map, it really is a special moment. *Team Fortress* is a fun and funny game, so it's been given a style to match.

## SIXTIES SWAGGER

At this point in my presentation the screen in Valve's boardroom flickers into life, and the new rendition of iconic *TF* map 2Fort appears before me. "We chose to do a kind of '60s sci-fi theme, and the reason for that was the exaggerated environments, the unrealistic weaponry and the notion of having one team just across the bridge from the other team." I nod. There are, after all, few international conflicts that revolve around two hangers that sit 100m away from each other. ↘

"Another reason we chose it

**"After showing *TF2* in '99, people thought we were blasé. But there are things I've waited for and they don't come out. We totally sympathise"**

Charlie Brown, engineer, Valve



## Know your enemies

**TF** co-creator Robin Walker explains the manifold roles of the *Team Fortress 2* cast members...

### THE PYRO

"He's essentially a first-line-of-defence character. Of all the combat classes, he moves the fastest but he doesn't really have the ability to directly kill people very quickly. The best place for a Pyro to be is forward, in front of your base, with enemies coming through and him just whizzing them down so that the defenders back behind you can mop them up really easily. He's very debilitating – if you get burnt by a Pyro it's really hard to concentrate on what you're doing. When you're burning..."

### THE ENGINEER

"He's for someone who wants to be extremely useful as a defender without actually having to aim at all. He's all about building certain stuff in good locations and maintaining them under fire. So he's probably the keystone to your defence; it's very hard to have a good defence without a good engineer, and the skill to being a good engineer is quite unlike being a good shooter in *Counter-Strike*. It's not about your aim at all; it's more strategic and tactical – it's almost like playing a mini-RTS."

### THE SNIPER

"He's fairly similar to other snipers in games, but has a slightly different mechanic to him – he really needs time to aim and shoot, it's not about snap-firing; his gun has a mechanic that requires him to take a bit of time to aim with each shot. He's really good at long range, a pretty good defender, but he has trouble going in offence because he's weak when he's coming up close. Going round corners and coming face-to-face with an enemy, he's going to be in a lot of trouble."

### THE SPY

"The spy has the ability to look like enemies and go and hide in the shadows. He's all about trying to get into your opponent's head; a great spy player is someone who can watch other players and pretend to be like them. The way spies usually win battles is by pretending to be a defender on the enemy side for a while and then waiting for the exact right moment that your offence is coming in, then taking out the engineer and stray sentry gun – the single thing that's holding your guys out – and everyone runs in."

## Shadows of men

Design cleverness means ally recognition is a breeze



You know how in CS sometimes your brain isn't quite in gear to recognise who's an enemy and who's not? Well, Valve are aiming to obliterate that moment of confusion with what they call a 'read hierarchy'. Essentially, what that means is that every class has a distinctive shape as well as its garish primary colour – meaning you'll be able to instantaneously recognise who people are and respond to their class accordingly. Simple, yet intelligent stuff.

was that thing of James Bond and the volcano with the secret lair underneath," continues Brown as we share a knowing *You Only Live Twice* 'Little Nellie' moment. "So it's seemingly simple, unassuming and non-threatening, but underneath it's hiding its intent, and so that again fits into this role of why team A is right across from team B."

2fort then, once two odd buildings separated by a moat and governed by that marvellous croaky *HLL* computer-overseer voice, has now become an odd blue smoke-belching industrial complex labelled 'General Industries Co', separated from a strange red farmyard affair. "These are what we call facades," continues Brown as he walks towards what is outwardly the red team's General Feed Co agricultural outpost. "You've got this low-tech, more farmy look then as you start moving closer towards the actual base, and through

the facades we start to drop little hints within the environment that maybe not all is as it seems.

"Here we have some cows, but if you look pretty closely they're actually billboard cows. And then if you look around you start to see bits of technology that don't really look like they belong."

### WHERE'S AUSTIN?

Indeed, the further you get into the base, the more the front is revealed to be nothing more than a movie set, with more odd futuro-'60s objects and sound-effects appearing, bleeping and blooping the deeper you delve. I mean, when you hit the flag room there isn't a patch of rural anywhere – just a huge seat where your supervillain boss normally sits, loads of old computers with big data wheels on and an impassable window that





### THE HEAVY WEAPONS GUY

"He has one of the most powerful guns in the game and he takes the most damage, but he's the slowest. He's definitely the class for if you want to be responsible for killing a bunch of guys but you're not that great an aim – if you're not like a *Counter-Strike* player who can get your crosshair on a head at 200 paces every time, then the Heavy's a good guy. He's a great beginner class, but at the same time he has the whole mechanic of winding-up and winding-down, which means you always have anticipation – there's a lot of skill in him."

### THE MEDIC

"The medic has changed almost completely in terms of how he works relative to previous *TF*, but his focus is still the same as we wanted for the old medic but never achieved... He's a support class, he makes everyone around him more powerful just by his presence. He's good at offence because as you leave your base, the ability to be resupplied etc goes away because you don't have your weapons caches and so on. The medic does that all for you."

### THE DEMOLITION MAN

"He's pretty versatile. He's a good defender because he has pipe bombs, so he can hold choke-points, get pipe bombs under the flag and kill anyone trying to pick it up. So he's a good defender in that respect, but he's also got a fair bit of destructive capability; good offence. He has some particularly nasty grenades which are really good for clearing enemies, sentry guns and so on. So essentially, he's both offence and defence."

### THE SCOUT

"This guy is the Scout, whose main defining aspect is his movement. He's all about moving really quickly, dodging things and so on. He's the primary flag-runner. To start off he doesn't do a lot of damage, but he can be pretty lethal up-close to someone like a spy or sniper – he moves so fast he can be really hard to hit with any kind of slow-firing weapon."

### THE SOLDIER

"Finally, this is the Soldier – who's sort of a core-combat class who's fairly versatile because he has a bit of movement, power and has rocket-jumping and so on. But apart from that he's pretty much a core-combat class. So if you wanted to jump around, go on offence a lot, stay in the middle in no-man's-land and defend or whatever, then he's your guy."

overlooks a massive room full of *Jetsons*-esque computer terminals.

What's more, although it clearly won't be a primary focus of the game, this *NOLFy* tangent of *TF2* is set to allow Valve to break new multiplayer ground (for them), by providing character bios and a touch of back-story between levels. Whether there will be a single-player contingent is still undecided, and very much a talking point at Valve HQ.

### JUMP THAT ROCKET

But enough of this, 'what of the gameplay?' I hear you grumble. There'll be new maps with new game modes – but the backbone of the game will be what it's always been – attack and defend. Indeed, the legacy of the relentless and punishing second-most iconic map Dustbowl looms large over proceedings. Beyond this, a lot is up in the air – Valve are still in full playtesting

and fiddling mode and don't want to promise anything that won't appear in the final product. But through asking repetitive questions and sighing a lot, I still teased some gems from bitten lips.

One of the most interesting departures for *TF2* is what the Commander mode first mooted in the '99 announcement has evolved into.

"We built a fully-functioning Commander mode in one of the early versions of *TF* and played the heck out of it. Our experience was that it wasn't so hot," explains *TF2* co-creator Robin Walker, describing something that was along the lines of what we've seen enter the *Battlefield* series.


"Next, we want to try something that's not Commander mode but still delivers its advantages. In a 30-minute experience you don't want to have one goal of 'win the game', and then half an hour later you know whether you

achieved it or not. We want to carve that half-hour experience up into little things, into mini-goals. Like 'someone needs to take out that sentry gun!', 'someone needs to take out that heavy!', 'we've got two guys coming in someone needs to be ready!' It's far more rewarding to achieve 30 things throughout a 30-minute experience". So is a *Quake Wars*-style mini-mission system coming? Don't count it out.

### AS GOOD AS A REST

One of the most important things for fans to realise as they wait with feverish anticipation is that nothing in *TF* is sacrosanct – changes and tweakage are afoot. The medic class, for example, has been thoroughly gutted and redesigned – and will no longer be able to spread disease as he once did. Similarly, the spy's ability to play dead is still up in the air – and now has a neat *Predator*-style

way of merging colours with the walls behind him. The permanence of some of the grenades, for example the Engineer's EMP one, is even looking a mite shaky – although Valve are expecting to do something funky with the game's natty visuals and the disorientation grenade. Most important of all, however, is the fact that *TF2* still has a fair chunk of development time to go – and when it does appear, don't expect it all to be in one go. *TF2* will be initially released with *Episode Two* and *Portal*, but from then on there will be a definite drip-feed of maps and content via Steam.

So there you have it: one of gaming's biggest mysteries now wide out in the open, and in a form that no bugger expected either. It's got genuine charm and it reeks of cool – but will Valve be able to appease noobs and fanboys in one sweeping '60s embrace? Here's hoping... 



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PCZONE

# REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest PC games

## No surfing

**R**ECALL IF YOU will Linus and his blue blanket. Well, I've just experienced the real-world equivalent of an ASBO youth running up to Linus, ripping that blanket from his hands and feeding it through a shredder in front of his horrified cartoon face. Yes, that's right, I'm without broadband (cue dramatic music).

In the chaos of moving house, my broadband has been accidentally cancelled. I've now gone cold turkey for two weeks and it's taking its toll. Finding directions, reading emails, keeping up-to-date with eBay auctions – you just don't realise how Net-dependent you are until you're rudely relegated back to 56k dial-up. It's the modern-day equivalent of Stone-Age man losing fire and having to revert back to eating raw meat and rubbing his hands together to keep warm. It's not good.

Back in the world of the *ZONE* office and speedy Internet access though, things have thankfully picked up on the reviews front with two Classic and two Recommended awards being given this issue. So what are you reading this for? Dive in and check them out!

*Suzy Wallace*

Suzy Wallace, reviews editor

## Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



62

GAME OF THE MONTH

## LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

Traveller's Tales rebuild the original (and best) *Star Wars* trilogy, piece by iconic plastic piece

### The PC ZONE Awards



**CLASSIC (90%+)**  
The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



**RECOMMENDED (75-89%)**  
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns *ZONE's* head is worthy of your love.



**DUMP (0-19%)**  
Don't shirk your duty – it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

#### AND THE REST

**ONLINE ONLY**  
Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.

**EXPANSION PACK**  
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know – life's not fair.

**ON THE DVD**  
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

### The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science, we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X6a-64.

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>CPU</b>	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
<b>RAM</b>	64MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	2GB
<b>Video</b>	32MB	64MB	128MB	256MB	512MB

### ALSO REVIEWED

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"Anyway Your Highness, I know you're working for those Duplo bastards."



# LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

Steve Hogarty switches off his targeting computer

DEVELOPER Traveller's Tales  
PUBLISHER Activision  
WEBSITE  
www.legostarwars2.com  
ETA Autumn 2006  
PRICE £29.99



## AT A GLANCE...

The sequel to the first one, now chronicling the classic later episodes of the *Star Wars* saga in the same wonderful LEGO style.

## System requirements

3

## HOW IT STACKS

LEGO STAR WARS II 80%

LEGO STAR WARS 79%

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 58%

**YES, IT'S BETTER** than the first one. But not because Traveller's Tales have taken the gameplay in a different direction. The reason *LEGO Star Wars II* is better than its precursor is simply because *A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi* are far better movies than those other ones George Lucas made.

Princess Leia is hotter than Patty or Panda or whatever her name was. Luke Skywalker is way cooler than Anakin 'Nooooooooo' Skywalker. And I won't insult you by comparing Chewbacca and Jar Jar Binks – that's like comparing peppermint ice cream and some sort of poisonous version of the same thing. This doesn't need pointing out, but the trilogy of movies this game is based on gives this game a very big triptych of reasons to gloat over its sibling.

Lucas rants aside (for now), if you haven't played *LEGO Star Wars*, this game will appear intimidating in its childlike innocence. The snap-together combination of a very rich Dane's plastic bricks and a

very rich American's space opera, it's what a more traditional journalist might call a nerdgasm (that's a nerd's orgasm).

## PLASTIC FANTASTIC

*LEGO Star Wars* is so appealing because it never takes either of its foundations seriously. It's a parody of Lucas and it's a parody of knobby bits of plastic, sometimes both at the same time. It's just brilliant, and that's where the game's charm lies. Whether it's in a plastic Princess Leia's attempts to jam a disc into R2-D2 where the slot would normally be, before just opening his head and chucking it in, or Obi-Wan Kenobi using the Force to disassemble an Imperial blast door and arbitrarily reassemble it as a TIE fighter in order to proceed, *LEGO Star Wars'* charisma is evident throughout.

In fact, it's what carries the game through three episodes. The gameplay itself is quite basic, and without the deliciously subtle (and entirely mute) humour, the game just wouldn't have any impetus.

The on-foot sections, for example, are essentially the same as in the previous game. You take command of a tiny brick edition of a *Star Wars* character, playing through the biggest scenes of each of the classic movies. The attack on the Death Star, the bit with the massive party everybody had with pointless CG fireworks, it's all in here. Using blasters and lightsabers you plough through hordes of Stormtroopers, Imperials and a revelatory father figure, who now presents a choking hazard in more ways than one.

Levels contain all sorts of LEGO-centric platform puzzles – by holding down a button next to a pile of bricks, characters can build pre-determined objects. Rubble next to a door might become a bomb, rubble next to a blockade might become a blaster cannon, rubble from a closet might become a piece of a disco dancefloor, which when combined with the other pieces using the Force, might become a LEGO disco in which plastic, angular Gamorreans can boogie with all four of their joints. You'll want to





## Indie gaming

Lego Nazis? I hate those guys



What with Traveller's Tales wallowing around freely in Lucasfilm's intellectual property like a rich lady's fat, spoilt cat, we can't help but wonder what other movie licences the team might get their hands on. Well, by that we mean we can't help but wonder if they'll make a LEGO *Indiana Jones* game. It'd probably be another platform adventure, with references being chucked about like confetti, but we'd still love it – especially the bit where your bump into a LEGO Hitler and get his autograph.

In fact, we'd love a whole range of notorious tyrants from history portrayed in LEGO. Get on it, Traveller's Tales.

**It's a parody of Lucas and it's a parody of knobbly bits of plastic, sometimes both at the same time. It's just brilliant, and that's where its charm lies**

Build every disassembled pile of LEGO you find, either for the puzzle progression or for the quirky joke.

### LEGO TEAM

Then, once you team up with the diminutive C-3PO or his R2 buddy, a puzzle mechanic becomes apparent. Certain doors and switches can only be activated by droids, and by switching between the characters in your party (which can now hold more characters than before), you must work out how to get the more robotically-inclined members of your party to their appropriate switches.

The same can be said for Force-wielding comrades, who often open paths for their less mobile friends by building bridges and platforms out of whatever bits of LEGO happen to be about. The entire game is co-op-enabled too, meaning a second player can jump in and drop out at any time on any level. If it hasn't been implied already, this game really needs to be played with a gamepad



They have him now.





## Han shot first

Damn you Lucas



So many angry nerds...

With *LEGO Star Wars II*'s release being tied into the DVD release of the unedited original trilogy, you'd think the developer would happily take the opportunity to nod at the sort of people who queue outside cinemas in Jedi robes. But rather than include the original cantina scene in the game, Traveller's Tales have instead used the latest tweak of the Han and Greedo bit. In short, Greedo shot first – pinning Han as a character who acts violently only in response to violence, rather than the out-and-out badass he should be. If you've no idea what I'm talking about, consider yourself lucky.

Well, it looks like the team has 'assembled'...



of some sort, and co-op mode is ideally played with two of the things – but get the set-up right and co-op adds a whole new level of enjoyment to an already superb single-player game.

The character-switching puzzles instantly become a matter of co-operation and co-ordination between you and your partner, and every level is workable with two players to differing extents. Of course, if your partner is somebody like Log, whose mangly cack-fingers simply cannot grasp the concept of flying *away* from the exploding Death Star, then it's not nearly as enjoyable.

Certain areas are only accessible by characters you either unlock later on in the game by collecting studs (LEGO currency which infests almost every inch of every level), or by wearing a helmet dished out by a special helmet-machine, offering reason to replay each level again in the game's Freeplay mode. This even works for Chewbacca, whose Stormtrooper helmet sits lopsided on top of his head for

maximum funny. Besides all that, there are some box-pushing puzzles, and it's pretty much there where the on-foot gameplay begins to repeat itself.

It's something we'd really hoped Traveller's Tales would overhaul for *LEGO Star Wars II*, because even though the game's personality is spread so thickly as to completely cover this lack of meaty gameplay, we could only imagine how amazing this game could be if the developers had taken the LEGO thing further than a basic platform adventure. But they haven't, so let's not dwell on it. Oh, and before we stop dwelling on it, this is a port of the Xbox version rather than the prettier-looking Xbox 360 version, which has some really nice depth of field effects. Now we can stop dwelling.

## TOY FIGHTER

Back to what I said on the other page though: the reason this game is better than the first is because of the greatness of the





Look at that range of emotions.



The gang during happier times.



Bet you can't guess what's happening here.



"Imperial March THIS!"

original trilogy, and this is no more apparent than in the much-improved flying sections of the game. Count the fantastic set-pieces on your fingers, or don't. You've got the Death Star trench, you've got the tow cable versus the AT-AT legs on Hoth, you've got the Millennium Falcon flying through the asteroid field, you've got the speeders on Endor – and all, as you might have guessed, presented in lovely LEGO, as well as being available in co-op mode.

These flying bits feel far more substantial this time around, and each one feels suitably different from the last. While the surrounding areas are noticeably less detailed than the rest of the game, and sometimes don't even look like LEGO, they're paced well and portioned out in such a way that you won't tire of them.

Traveller's Tales have also added the ability to mix and match body parts, and to use your hideous genetic mix-ups in the full game's Freeplay mode – something you'll no doubt be anticipating. So, to answer your

questions, yes you can put Yoda in a Princess Leia bikini, and yes you can put a Chewie head on Vader's suit. Neither can be found sexually appealing, however. And of course, there's a whole host of unlockables, again adding to the game's replayability. There's also a big holographic percentage sign in the Mos Eisley cantina telling you how much of the game you've beaten (to two decimal places no less), urging you to play more with its vaguely mocking shade of hologram blue.

## RETURN OF THE JEDI

*LEGO Star Wars II* is very similar to its predecessor, but if you enjoyed that one you'll undoubtedly love this one even more. The gameplay isn't as clever as the humour, but it's by no means bad – Force abilities are more wide-ranging now with Sidious's lighting fingers and Vader's throat-choking – and destroying little brick enemies never, strangely, becomes tiresome. I've deliberately avoided telling you all the good

bits too, because half the fun is seeing George Lucas's best work being subverted by bits of moulded plastic.

It's an achievement to have created an inherently funny universe whose punchline never wears thin – the game hangs on LEGO jokes and *Star Wars* jokes, and even though a part of me wants to say that underneath it all *LEGO Star Wars* isn't actually a great game, I can't. There are moments when the humour is all but absent, where if you blur your eyes slightly you could forget it's made of stickers and plastic, and for that terrifying moment you're playing a below-average platformer – but that moment is rare. It comes to it once or twice, but when you build an AT-ST out of junk, or a bit of LEGO does something stupid, *LEGO Star Wars* successfully raises its guard again. And then you're happy, and the LEGO people are happy. *LEGO Star Wars II* is a fun, happy game, and it's shut down all the garbage compactors... Of our hearts. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

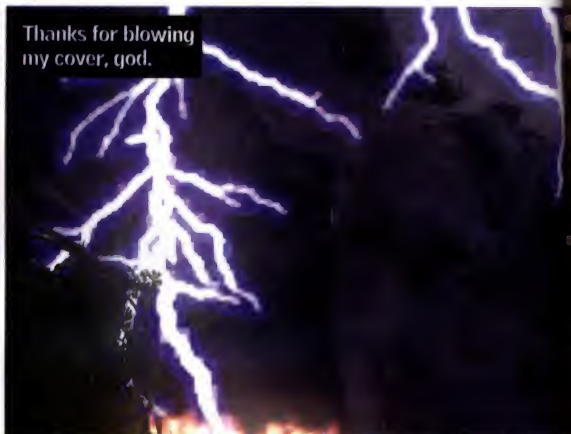
Graphics Nice, but not as nice as 360's  
Sound It's *Star Wars*, use your imagination  
Multiplayer Fantastic co-op

- ✓ Brilliant fun
- ✓ Based on the three good ones
- ✓ Co-op mode
- ✓ It's got Wookiees
- ✗ Not very long & quite easy
- ✗ Doesn't expand on the original

# 80

Fantastic plastic





# CALL OF JUAREZ



Insane with greed and religious fundamentalism, *Jon Blyth* whips some boulders

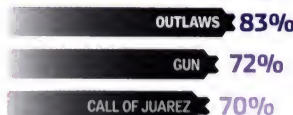
**DEVELOPER** Techland  
**PUBLISHER** Ascaron/93 Games  
**WEBSITE**  
[www.callofjuarez.com](http://www.callofjuarez.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £34.99

## AT A GLANCE...

A Western shooter in which you play a nice young man and an insane preacher, chasing yourself around America.

**System requirements** 4

## HOW IT STACKS



**I**T TOOK THE Italian Sergio Leone to shoot films in the Spanish desert to make decent films about American cowboys. Mel Brooks and Ang Lee have since jostled the genre around a bit to include prolonged fart jokes and bumming, but Clint Eastwood was the best cowboy ever, and he never lifted a leg and blamed it on his horse. And – not that he had anything against that sort of thing, I'm sure – I just don't think Clint's gay.

Reverend Ray certainly wouldn't approve of that sort of thing. He's an old-school brimstone preacher, the doomsaying old curmudgeon who you'd dismiss as a harmless lunatic if he didn't have a Bible in his hand. And he does have that Bible in his hand; just tap five and fire to launch one of his favourite Old Testament passages. This scares a few of your opponents, but more importantly – with your other hand free to fire a gun – it's way f\*\*\*in' cool.

Between Ray's levels, you play Billy – the young man Ray's chasing for the murder of his brother. A murder we suspect he didn't commit, but evidence has never been that much of a problem for the fundamentalists. Billy's return from a hunt for the mythical

treasure of Juarez has ended without success, and he's come home to a town that's hardly happy to see him. You can't claim Billy's an innocent – ten minutes into the game and you've already stolen two guns and nearly gotten a free gob job from a friendly whore.

The idea of chasing yourself around the American landscape seems odd, but it works. The levels touch upon – but avoid repeating – each other. Occasionally you see the same encounter from both characters' perspectives. Simple but effective, there's talent in the storytelling. Script and voice-acting is my personal bugbear, but it's genuinely important here; *Call Of Juarez* is a homage to cowboy films. Decent Western games are few and far between, so getting the voices and script wrong would have been a tragedy. Fret not – it's all excellent.

## I SHOOT DEAD PEOPLE

The boasted 'specific gameplay style and abilities' can be summarised thusly: Billy can jump higher and has a whip for swinging around on, and Ray uses TNT and a Bible, as well as a bullet-time ability that's activated when drawing his guns from their holsters. As Billy, you'll skulk in the shadows, learning

to hide from lightning and using thunder to cover your noisier actions. As Ray – just shoot everything you see.

Only, not quite everything. I did what comes naturally, and tried being an arsehole in the saloon. When I threw a chair at a poker player, I was confronted with the warning 'attempts to injure innocent civilians, horses or corpses will cause the game to end'. Although the threat was never carried out (despite my serious efforts), there was a slight discomfort as my suspension of disbelief crawled out of my navel. Game? I've never wanted to shoot a horse so much in my life, and believe me – I've spent most of my life wanting to shoot horses.

Sad to say, combat lets *Juarez* down. Ray's concentration mode (bullet-time) is nearly constantly available, and the bandits seem to flit between a couple of set attack-points, giving you the chance to pop in, slow down, shoot and pop out, while the enemy are paralysed by time tricks and stupidity. The start points, scripts, triggers and all that supposedly behind-the-scenes stuff is just too transparent. It's still a good game, but with more attention paid to the AI, it could have been a lot better.





## Hats off to Jesus

Stetson, Stets-off and rest



When the boys from 93 Games came into the office to give us a sneaky-peek at *Call Of Juarez* some months ago, the first question that crossed our minds wasn't about the game's earnest dedication to decades-old Westerns. It wasn't about the inspiration for Reverend Ray, one of the most pleasingly evil Christians ever to have delusions of being god's sword. We wanted to know if you could shoot people's hats off. Seconds after asking, a slo-mo headshot sent a Stetson wheeling into a horse's flank. To say I cheered would be telling the truth, without understatement. Shooting people's hats off is the best.

Billy's levels, which are more stealth and platform-based, are entertaining in a different way, but it's still a matter of repetition. At one point, I crept – like a Mexican Bugs Bunny – around the back of a man as he performed his patrol. If he'd turned around, I would have kissed him full on the lips and ran off, but I can't work out if that's Warner Bros or Ang Lee's influence.

### PECKERHEAD

Creeping around, you'll overhear some great bandit conversations; discussing a piss-stench problem, one man's fear of a 'coyote biting off his nutsack'. It's here, and in the 'Wanted' posters (featuring the developers) where you see the team's sense of humour, which is a strange relief in such an earnest game. I like *Call Of Juarez*. It has numerous problems, most notably the AI. But there's something beneath all its faults I can forgive; a Western game that has Reverends, shows reverence and even features the occasional smear of puerile humour. The insult 'peckerhead' has, for a while at least, re-entered my active vocabulary. **PCZ**

Aren't you in Spinal Tap?



## PCZONE

Graphics Purdy as a wagon  
Sound Jus' the ticket  
Multiplayer Sho' is

- ✓ Good story and acting
- ✓ Serious, occasionally funny
- ✓ All that HDR malarkey
- ✓ A good Western game
- ✗ Man, them bandits is super-dumb
- ✗ Cowboy bunning frowned upon

**70**  
Crazy ol'-time religion



# Are you frightened of y



A website is the easiest and most affordable way to communicate your ideas, products and information to a global audience or simply to your family and friends. It just takes 4 easy steps.



## Create your website in 4 easy steps. It's that simple.

### 1 Personalise your website

**Website Settings Wizard**

Step 1 of 3

Step 1 of 3  
Welcome to the Website Settings Wizard. This wizard will help you create a website for your business or hobby. It will guide you through the process of creating a website, from choosing a layout to adding pages and publishing.

Website Title: My Kayaking Adventures  
Slogan: 2006 - 11 years of adventure!  
Footer: Created with T&I WebsiteBuilder

These settings can be changed as often as you like.

### 2 Choose your layout

**Website Settings Wizard**

Step 2 of 3

Step 2 of 3  
Welcome to the Website Settings Wizard. This wizard will help you create a website for your business or hobby. It will guide you through the process of creating a website, from choosing a layout to adding pages and publishing.

Layout: Choose a layout for your website. The layout you choose will determine the overall look and feel of your website.

Layout: Choose a layout for your website. The layout you choose will determine the overall look and feel of your website.

### 3 Add pages

**Website Settings Wizard**

Step 3 of 3

Step 3 of 3  
Welcome to the Website Settings Wizard. This wizard will help you create a website for your business or hobby. It will guide you through the process of creating a website, from choosing a layout to adding pages and publishing.

Website Pages: Select the pages you would like to add to your website. Click on the links for suggestions.

Website Pages: Select the pages you would like to add to your website. Click on the links for suggestions.

### 4 Add text and publish

**Website Settings Wizard**

Step 4 of 3

Step 4 of 3  
Welcome to the Website Settings Wizard. This wizard will help you create a website for your business or hobby. It will guide you through the process of creating a website, from choosing a layout to adding pages and publishing.

Website Pages: Select the pages you would like to add to your website. Click on the links for suggestions.

Website Pages: Select the pages you would like to add to your website. Click on the links for suggestions.



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Tempers flared in the queue for the drive-thru.



"£20 quid's worth of petrol and a Kit-Kat please."



Remember: mirror, signal, manoeuvre.

# GTR 2



**Suzy Wallace gets her big end away...**

DEVELOPER Simbin  
PUBLISHER Atari  
WEBSITE  
[www.10tacle.com/gtr-game](http://www.10tacle.com/gtr-game)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £29.99



## AT A GLANCE...

Super-realistic driving sim based on the 2004 FIA GT series, with scarily accurate handling, raucous sound and excellent new modes.

## System requirements

4

## HOW IT STACKS

GTR 2	92%
GTR	90%
TOCA RACE DRIVER 3	85%

**A**S A KID, we all have dreams, hopes and desires that most of us will probably never realise. For myself, getting to drive a highly powered sports car round a track was always pretty high up my list but it was never likely to happen. That is, until Simbin came along and like some kind of Swedish fairy godmother granted my wish (minus the wand and tutu).

Yes OK, I know it's only a game, but let's face it, it's hardly like I'd be able to afford the real deal anyway. Plus, this way, if I do manage to get closely acquainted with one of the circuit's walls, I get to avoid an angry rep of my insurance company knocking on my door and asking for his £500K back. As far as driving titles go, this is probably the closest you'll get to the real deal.

## SLIDEWAYS ACTION

The main draw of Simbin's titles have always been their extraordinary driving model. As soon as you take the wheel, you'll know that this is no casual racer. Instead, you're treated to a taster of just what it's like to drive one of these monsters in real life. Braking in straight lines, bringing

power back on smoothly and finding the perfect racing line; that's what this racer is all about. Adopt any other driving style and you'll be met with crashes, lots of off-track and facing the wrong way at 100mph; all pretty scary things to experience in half-a-million pounds worth of metal.

Simbin have tweaked the model a little from *GTR* and as such, the cars now feel far more solid beneath you and with a bit of practice, some controllable sideways action is now achievable, whether from putting down lots of power early out of corners or going for that elusive full corner drift (although if you manage this, you deserve to be worshipped). Wet-weather racing has also been lavished with attention as you struggle to control putting 600bhp down on the slippery road surface without wheel-spinning.

With a driving model so scarily realistic, *GTR* was always pretty daunting for newcomers but this time round, Simbin have catered for novices and experts alike with the Driving School. As well as the basic tutorials on accelerating, braking, cornering and overtaking, each track features its own custom lessons, from how to tackle difficult corners to trying to beat

the instructor at a full lap. It's a brilliant addition, getting newcomers up to speed faster and easier, offering plenty of challenge and longevity for the more capable players and adding extra value by unlocking custom championships too.

## ROAD RAGE

Of course, once you get back onto the real track, you'll have to contend with other drivers – and it was here that we encountered a bit of an issue. While the AI drivers do seem generally more intelligent, if you end up braking too early for a corner with a car behind you (as you will when learning a track), you'll find that there's an annoying tendency for them to rear-end you, sending you spinning off the track and pretty much wiping out any chance you may have had of winning. Of course, with a bit of practice, your braking points will shift, but it's an annoying niggle nonetheless, especially for beginners getting to know their way around.

When contact is made, it's all quite spectacular. The improved damage model features particle effects (combining pretty smoke with small lumps of car) and ensures that individual pieces of debris are now



"Hello, is that the dent repair shop?"



The Zhuhai track is a welcome addition.



Racing drivers can't park to save their lives.



## The Driving School is a great addition, getting newcomers up to speed and providing challenge for better drivers

modelled, so should a piece of your car detach itself, it now creates a hazard for the vehicles behind you, perhaps resulting in a secondary pile-up. Great for cackling like a maniac to yourself if you're the one dropping bits over the track, but not so great if you're that car behind.

### FULL VALET

Of course, the visuals have been upgraded too. The new DirectX9.0 engine is shown off to stunning effect in the cockpit views, with gorgeous hi-res textures, real-time shadows and your animated driver reaching for gears and turning the wheel, although it's hardly the easiest view to drive in. Most of the tracks look great but some have obviously been paid more attention than others so you may spy a few lower-res textures rushing past your window. The good news is that the game will run at a decent frame-rate on most machines, but should you turn everything

up, throw a bit of rain and plenty of cars in there too, then it can make quite a dent in your frame-rate. Try a full grid start at the 24-hour Spa race in the wet to see what we mean.

The other new modes are also welcome additions. While Time Trial's bound to become a massive



The Maserati's a bit of a monster.



Spa 24-hour = hardcore.



Time to take them up the arse.





## Are we there yet?

Got your Pro-Plus and Red Bull? Time to take the Lamborghini out for a massive 24-hour test drive round Spa...



Here we are, sitting on the grid in full daylight, been to the loo, ready to go. Visibility's good, everything's working and we're about to set off.



Dusk falls. It's a dangerous time to drive as you round a corner and are suddenly blinded by the low sun. Where are the visors?



It's dark, visibility is next to nothing and it was his fault. Honest. Anyway, say goodbye to headlights and hello to pitch-black racing.



I've made it through to dawn. Like a survivor in a vampire film, I'm just glad to be alive. Can't say so much for my car though.



"Just popping down the shops for some biscuits."



This is the lightest night-shot we could find.

**For driving sims, Simbin have proved yet again that the PC is the platform for real racers**



Bright light!  
Bright light!

online hit, the 24-hour races really cater for the true hardcore. Not for the faint-hearted, these will really push your driving skills to the limit. It's completely the opposite of something like *TOCA RD3*, where the emphasis is all on constantly pushing and overtaking on every corner. Here, you'll have to take things much more carefully if you want to make it to the finish line, plus you'll also have to contend with plenty of pit-stops and the ever-changing lighting conditions.

### I CAN'T SEE YOU

Racing at night's definitely not for the lily-livered either; the pitch-black surroundings may have you reaching for your contrast and if you manage to lose your headlights, you'll need to borrow a pair of Sam Fisher's goggles just to see where you're going. True nut-cases can also race it

in real-time, but the rest of us will be more interested in the scaled-down versions, starting at one hour.

There's also a host of minor improvements such as a better menu system, the addition of mouse steering (although it's criminal to not play this game with a FFB steering wheel), as well as the addition of the time acceleration feature from *GT Legends*. However, if you own the original *GTR*, you may wonder if Simbin's additions have made *GTR2* worth a purchase. Rest assured, they have – the tweaked driving model, Driving School mode and the addition of five new tracks are worth the purchase price alone.

As far as driving sims go, Simbin have yet again proved that the PC is the platform for real racers. If you're after realism, forget *Gran Turismo* and *Forza* – this is the sim that you want to take the wheel of. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Gorgeous cars, tracks mostly well-done  
Sound Raucous engines and great secondary noise  
Multiplayer 32-player races and uploaded time trials

- ✓ Cars and interiors look gorgeous
- ✓ Improved driving model
- ✓ Driving School adds longevity
- ✓ Other modes also excellent additions
- ✗ Occasional rear-end shunts for beginners

# 92

Top of the range





## BLISS ISLAND



**Sophie Anderton**  
eaten by shark

**DEVELOPER** PomPom Software  
**PUBLISHER** Codemasters  
**WEBSITE** [www.funsta.com](http://www.funsta.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £12.99

### System requirements 1

**M**OST PEOPLE'S IDEA of an island paradise would include glitzy casinos, poorly-guarded breweries and promiscuous hula girls loitering on white, sandy beaches. You won't find any of this on *Bliss Island* though; just Hoshi, a creature who enjoys using his air-blowing trunk to fill the sky with fluffy clouds. Damn, and we were hoping for another poker game.

*Bliss Island* is the story of what Hoshi gets up to on his Friday nights. Not drinking cider and having shopping-trolley races around the Tesco car park, but playing island-based shooting games set up by his blue mates. The different game modes on offer are all variants of a core snooker-esque gameplay, which in one game has you shooting falling fruit into big-gobbed monsters, and in another using a fluffy ball-



monster-thing to knock bugs off of a friendly sunflower.

The five main game variants get increasingly more complex as you advance, and present a tough challenge in the latter stages of the game. While it is fairly short and there's not an incredible amount of variety on offer, *Bliss Island* is an enjoyable and accessible puzzle game, and the charm of the obscenely cheerful art style and soundtrack can't be denied.

But don't take our word for it; you can enjoy a free trial right now on our cover DVD.

Andy Robinson



## BIRTH OF AMERICA

**Mel Gibson is thankfully**  
nowhere to be found

**DEVELOPER** AGE0D  
**PUBLISHER** Strategy First  
**WEBSITE** [www.strategyfirst.com/en/games/BirthOfAmerica/](http://www.strategyfirst.com/en/games/BirthOfAmerica/)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99

### System requirements 2

**L**ET'S BE FAIR; the American Revolution wasn't the most exciting of conflicts. In fact, 18th century soldiers seemed more interested in buffing their frock coats than blowing stuff up. Thankfully, *Birth Of America* does a good job of keeping the war interesting, in a turn-based battle set-up with plenty of tactical depth and a wealth of historical information.

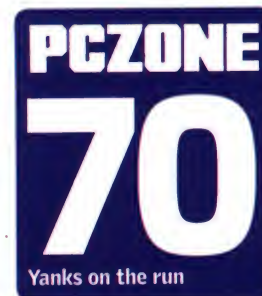
The game covers two iconic American conflicts: the first is the French and Indian War, while the second more prominent scuffle is the American Revolution. Action plays out over a colourful game board, which is split into areas each rated for terrain effects as well as showing important towns and forts. Each turn takes place over one month of in-

game time, which helps to keep things fast-paced and exciting.

At first the complexity of the game can be quite daunting; combat units, historical leaders, Indians and ships all have to be simultaneously manoeuvred around the map, and strategic towns targeted. Work has been made through tutorials and the GUI to help the less strategy-savvy, but you're still likely to spend the first few hours clueless, marching around the mid-west.

Once you've mastered it though, *Birth Of America* is a fine entry in the turn-based strategy genre. It's not going to blow the big guns out of the water, but it could be worth checking out purely so good ol' Blighty can dominate the Americas once more.

Andy Robinson





"Welcome to the festival  
– my festival of bullets."

Hedge-hopping  
for grown-ups.

"I've got a hostage.  
Look at me, damn it!"

Walls, giver of cover.

# RESERVOIR DOGS

Jon Blyth has been barking like a little doggy all day

**DEVELOPER** Volatile Games  
**PUBLISHER** Eidos  
**WEBSITE**  
www.eidos.co.uk/gss/  
reservoirdogs/  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £29.99

## AT A GLANCE...

Play the bits from Tarantino's cult movie debut that you didn't get to see. Cut in with the bits you did.

### System requirements

2

### HOW IT STACKS

GRAND THEFT AUTO:  
VICE CITY 95%

RESERVOIR DOGS 57%

THE GODFATHER 57%

**M**Y REACTION TO the existence of a *Reservoir Dogs* game was suspicious excitement. Unlike *The Godfather*, where the feeling was baffled contempt. This makes sense: Coppola's films feel more valuable, coming before George Lucas had made twelvety billion dollars from the sales of plastic Stormtroopers. Although I have more love for Tarantino's films than any *Godfather* film, they don't feel precious. They consume and regurgitate pop references, so they're more valid fodder for pop culture's greedy sisters in the games industry. Making a videogame of *Reservoir Dogs* might still be cynical, but it's not filling a Supersoaker with dog's arse and letting rip on the Mona Lisa.

*Reservoir Dogs* has a promising concept – you play through the action alluded to in the movie. At my most optimistic and naive, I can conclude the developers must love the movie themselves. So now, I'm doubly excited. They wanted to see Mr Blue's miraculous escape from the diamond store, they wanted to be Mr Blonde riding around with a cop in his trunk (pardon my

American). And, as much as it's possible for anyone to want to be Steve Buscemi, they wanted to take part in Mr Pink's exploits with his bag full of whatever.

You've probably been goaded into a dirty froth by now, but what if I told you the film soundtrack was intact? That you'll be driving around to *Little Green Bag*, *Stuck In The Middle With You* and the 'Oo-Ga-Cha-Ka' song? If you were a little doggy, then I'm doing the equivalent of holding a lead above your head and saying, "You wanna walk? Wanna yes go walk now?" for 300 words.

## THE DIFFICULT BROWN

Now imagine, now that I've got you all excited and ready for that thrilling walk, that I just sit back down and watch *Songs Of Praise*. That look of lost confusion and wasted energy is exactly what you'll feel playing through *Reservoir Dogs*.

The 15 short missions are of two types: driving and crowd control. Both are fun enough, but both are far too shallow. Over the driving levels, there's a slight tweak each time, but in essence – get where you're going, fast. Fun, but short. And

necessarily repetitive, considering you're all going to the same place.

The real disappointment lies in the crowd-control levels. Your professionalism is based on your bodycount. Of course, you'll have to rough people up, but killing everyone is the mark of a psychopath, not a pro. So you use hostages and controlled violence instead. The problem is, the training level really does sum up the entire game; shout at civilians, take a hostage, punch the hostage. This very quickly loses its novelty when you realise that if you want to reach Consummate Pro rank, it's the only three things you can do. As for the bonus item, blueprints – just look for a building you don't have to go into. There'll be a blueprint in there, sure as shit.

## NICE SLICE

Adrenalin, which accrues as you play, adds a cinematic flair to goings-on. The psychopaths among you will use the – wait for it, this is even gayer than squabbling over who's Mr Pink – 'Bullet Festival' to win a few seconds to shoot everything in slo-mo. Professionals can use a signature move to torture their hostage, causing everyone in



## Bullet Festival

What I did on my summer holiday



The name 'Bullet Festival' perhaps comes from an old Midlands tradition, where children would bring bullets and tins of pineapple chunks into school, then give them to lonely old ladies. Smaller villages would hold Bullet Fêtes, with rides such as the deadly Bullet Carousel, which was outlawed after it was noted that every child riding on it died of severe bullet wounds. To commemorate the dead, an annual Bullet Parade is held, adding hundreds to the death toll every year. I'm talking utter bollocks, of course, but come on... Bullet Festival? Pfft.



**Just because this isn't as cynical as *The Godfather's* art-slashing antics doesn't mean it's any good**

the area to drop their guns in disgust. This answers the question you were all silently asking – 'how will they work slicing an ear off into this game?'

Beyond finding out what each character's move is, the game's easy enough for you not to need these tricks, and besides – they do a CG rendition of Mr Blonde's ear-slicing scene between levels anyway. Speaking of which, Volatile would have done well to leave these scenes alone or not use them. Watching a dead-eyed computer simulation of Michael Madsen mutilating a cop is about as engaging as wireframe tits are erotic.

It's a console port, but the PC shines an unflattering light on its faults. It doesn't look any better, you'd be better off with a gamepad to avoid wild mouse flails. Just because this game isn't as cynical as *The Godfather's* art-slashing antics, doesn't mean it's any good – it's with great regret I have to say it's not. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Low-quality jpgs  
Sound Tune! Silence! Tune!  
Multiplayer You can look after yourself

- ✓ Good story, well tied-in
- ✓ Car chases are fun
- ✓ Crowd control is a good idea
- ✗ Crowd control is the only idea
- ✗ Car chases are way easy
- ✗ Takes as long to finish as the film

**57**  
Tarantin-oh-no



## U-BOAT: BATTLE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

*Silent Hunter III* is going to Ibiza

DEVELOPER X1 Software

PUBLISHER Deep Silver

WEBSITE [www.silent-hunteriii.com](http://www.silent-hunteriii.com)

ETA Out now

PRICE £12.99

System requirements **3**



**D**ID YOU KNOW that during World War II, Germany sent over 60 submarines into the Mediterranean and none of them came back? I didn't, and because my entire knowledge of World War II history comes from the intro sequence to *Dad's Army*, I also didn't realise that there was a navy scuffle in the Mediterranean at all. The Union Jack arrow doesn't even go near there.

*U-Boat: Battle In The Mediterranean* is definitely an expansion for torpedo-philosophes. It bolsters *Silent Hunter III* by adding over 40 new ships as well as various campaigns out of Romania and Constanza in German Type II subs, plus campaigns out of Salamis, Taranto and Greece in Type VII-Cs. If you know what that means, you've either already

bought this add-on or you're outraged that they're charging money for it when there are free add-ons like *Grey Wolves* already out there. If you don't know what that means, then you're only reading this review because you want to hear a really good submarine pun.

Instead, here's an interesting fact. The German word for submarine is 'unterseeboot', which literally means 'under sea boat'. This expansion is full of them and doesn't tamper with the winning *Silent Hunter III* formula. Still, it's amazing how such a bunch of inventive linguists couldn't get a single unterseeboot out of das Mediterranean, but who did they think they were kidding anyway?

Steve Hogarty



**PCZONE**  
**52**  
Das Boot it up



RULE THE WORLD.

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RULE THE WORLD

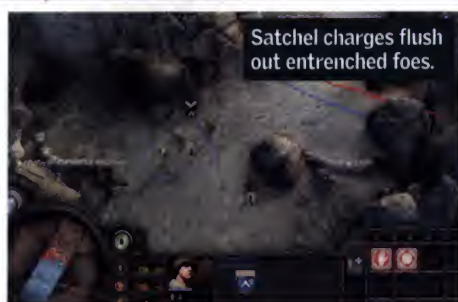


**nhn.**  
GAMES



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# COMPANY OF HEROES

Sam Kiildsen has company. But is it good company or bad company?

DEVELOPER Relic  
PUBLISHER THQ  
WEBSITE  
www.companyofheroesgame.com  
ETA September 29  
PRICE £34.99



## AT A GLANCE...

RTS gods Relic tackle World War II, serving up a brutal, noisy, adrenalin-pumping and tactical game. It's a kick up the tired genre's jacksy.

### System requirements



### HOW IT STACKS

COMPANY OF HEROES 93%

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II 90%

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR 81%

**D**ESPITE BEING THE best RTS out this year – and certainly one of the best ever to grace these hallowed pages – *Company Of Heroes* isn't really a revolutionary game. What Relic have done is take the real-time strategy genre, cut it open, examine it, pull out all the smelly old bits that people hate and put in some lovely tasty new bits that people will like. Then they have sewn it up, put it on its feet and sent it out into the world to, er, bring happiness, light and cheer wherever it sets foot. It's like some kind of lean, mean RTS Frankenstein. Or some kind of lean, mean RTS Frankenstein's monster, for the pedants out there.

What I'm trying to say is that it's more an evolution of the genre. With *Company Of Heroes*, Relic have moved the RTS one significant step closer to perfection.

## I'M LOSING WOOD

For example, resource management is a part of the game, but tedious gold, wood or Tiberium-farming is not – instead you accrue points by capturing and holding sections of territory, in a system similar to that used by Relic's last effort, *Dawn Of War*. You also build up special XP points by killing enemies.

Yes, it's still resource-gathering, and you still use the points to create new units and unlock new abilities, but it's been cleverly engineered to force you into combat rather than encourage you to hang back, 'turtle up' and spend five hours constructing an elaborate, impregnable and largely pointless stronghold.

And then there's the tactics. There's nothing particularly inspired here; you have to make use of cover or your troops will be ripped to ribbons, and if you hold the enemy with one unit and then flank him with another, you'll probably wipe him out with ease. Tanks blow up quicker if you get round the back, where their armour isn't as thick. It's basic stuff, true – but it's rare to see it properly implemented in a mainstream RTS. We're talking about a genre where most combat is still determined by an abstract scissors-paper-stone mechanic, and the fact that *Company Of Heroes* uses real-world tactics that actually work made me feel like some kind of non-moustachioed General Montgomery.

It helps that, in the words of one developer, "shit blows up real good" in this game. My PC's subwoofer hasn't rumbled out explosions so buttock-quakingly

booming since *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* arrived a couple of years ago.

The way enemy troops somersault through the air after receiving the delicate attentions of a Calliope rocket launcher is a thing of terrible, Havok-induced beauty we might even go so far as to say that it's "teh aw350m3 dood," if our parlance contained such terms (but it doesn't lol). It's an eye-popping display of destruction, but there's also a real purpose to it. This is one of a handful of games with fully destructible terrain. The battlefield can be completely reshaped by tanks, mortars and aerial bombardments.

## STAY LOW

Your GIs can huddle in the craters that result from an artillery strike, or a tank can power straight through a wall to provide them with an alternative path to the next objective. And it's not just about knocking things down: you can also use engineers to build defensive structures like sandbags, barbed wire, tank traps and machine-gun nests, or order a unit to take up positions in a building (and you can see them actually do it – they'll kick open the shutters and mount a machine gun in a window frame).

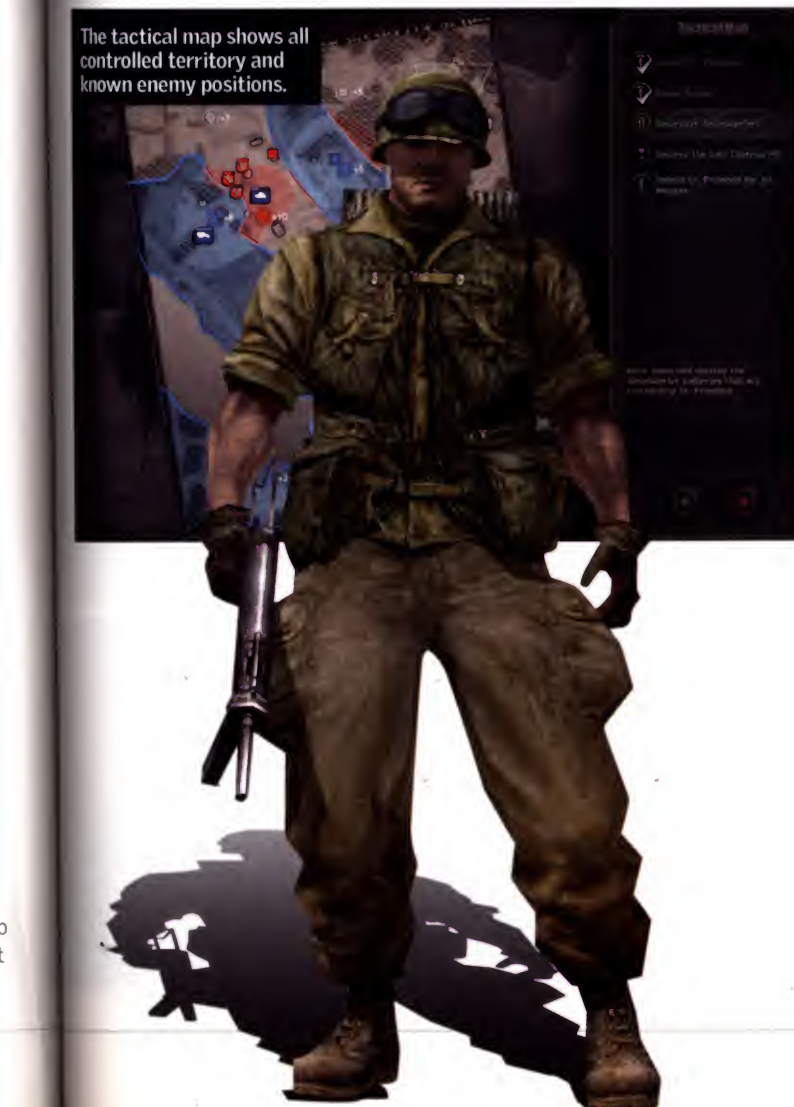




The green dots signify the best cover available.



Turn German guns against their former masters.



The tactical map shows all controlled territory and known enemy positions.

## Company men

The story behind Able Company



Cut-scenes make use of the in-game engine.

The single-player campaign in *Company Of Heroes* follows the story of Able Company, a fictitious band of brethren at the vanguard of 1944's Allied invasion of Normandy. Yep, you know what that means: the opening level is Omaha Beach and it's filled with thousands of senseless, horrible deaths. In between missions, the company's exploits are detailed by a man with a voice so gravelly that, were he not a voice actor, he could make a living vomiting onto people's driveways in order to surface them with rough stones. But Relic tell us he's a real veteran of the Normandy campaign – a fact they weren't even aware of when they hired him.

## Keeping your men in cover is vital to succeed, and thankfully Relic have made doing so a no-brainer

Keeping your men in cover is vital if you want to succeed here, and thankfully Relic have made doing so a no-brainer: hover the pointer over a part of the battlefield and dots will appear to indicate where your men will end up, should you decide to click. Green dots are the best type of cover (ie behind sandbags or solid walls), yellow is minor cover (hedgerows and craters), no dots means virtually no protection and red (the middle of road, for example) means your men are more exposed than Arnold Schwarzenegger at the beginning of a *Terminator* movie. It works well.

### COVER ME BAD

Such bunkering down is necessary at times – if you don't, the nature of the single-player missions and the abilities of the AI will hand you a severe ass-whopping. Just as the real World War II wasn't all about building up a huge force and simply crushing the enemy, so you'll spend much of your time here defending as well as attacking. The German troops retreat back to their lines when they know they've lost a skirmish – "They don't like it up 'em, Mr Mainwaring," etc – but they always seem to come back in more

numbers, as well as pop up elsewhere on the map to try and recapture territory. It means that you often find yourself fighting on several fronts at once, but never in a frustrating way.

An RTS wouldn't be an RTS without some kind of tech-tree, of course, and aside from the usual "You must build x to have y" arrangement, *Company Of Heroes* has a real humdinger – a beautiful sycamore of a tech-tree with leaves made out of bullets and that. It's called Company Commander, and it utilises the XP points you amass by slaughtering foes and capturing territory. Gather enough XP for a full Command Point and you can spend it on special powers, like the ability to drop in paratroopers anywhere on the map, or call in heavy artillery fire on an enemy position. Once you've selected one of these abilities, it can generally be used over and over again – but each time it'll cost you some of your regular munitions or manpower points too, to prevent you from going crazy and spamming the Hun with shock and awe tactics.

It's balancing touches like this that ensure the game remains a challenge too. There's a population





## Croc, monsieur?

Our favourite tank has a big flame-thrower attached to it



It's like a metal dragon.

The best tank you get your hands on in the single-player game is the Crocodile, a Sherman variant designed to deal with enemy infantry instead of other tanks. To this end, the main gun has been replaced by a huge flame-thrower, which shoots deadly arcs of burning liquid across the screen in awesome fashion. You can also fit the Croc with a bulldozer to clear obstacles and bust through hedgerows. Also available is the rocket launcher-toting Calliope variant, while the standard Sherman can be fitted with a bigger main gun or a crazy, whirling, mine-clearing flail. Tanks very much.

The enemy is the other way, dude.



You can almost taste the dust.



cap, determined by the number of sectors you hold, so you can't build up an overwhelming force of 80 tanks before venturing out and taking on the Germans. It all comes back to this: you need to use tactics and cover.

When all the things I've mentioned come together you're left with something truly challenging and, more importantly, fun. Take the level where you find yourself defending the town of Carentan, which you've just captured, from a German counter-attack.

It begins with you entrenching a lot of troops and, if you play anything like me, with a ragtag handful of men squatting in a corner of the now shattered city. This is the one remaining territory you control, and it's hanging-on-by-your-fingernails stuff as you attempt to hold off hordes of tanks and jackbooted stormtroopers. The German artillery pounds the buildings around you into dust while you await the reinforcements that can save you. You run

from cover to cover, using improvised satchel charges and your own off-map artillery to stem the iron tide as your men drop one by one – and then suddenly, you realise the clock has reached zero and your buddies are on their way. Shermans roll into the town and from then on, it's payback time. Now the adrenalin really kicks in; this is every bit as thrilling as the most memorable parts of *Call Of Duty* or *Medal Of Honor* – and how often can you say that about an RTS game?

## ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM

Another thing that needs to be mentioned before I reach the end of the review is the presentation. This is the first real-time strategy game where you can zoom right into the action if you want; there's an incredible amount of detail. You probably won't want to play the game from down there – in fact attempting to do so would make you insanely masochistic – but you'll certainly want to pause it every now and

The sexual tension is palpable in these cut-scenes.



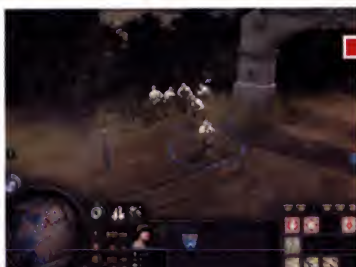
Combining armour and infantry is key to success.





## Veterancy surgery

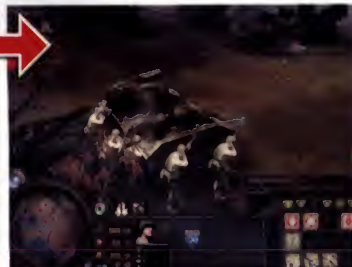
Call on tougher troops for tougher jobs



I have to take a tricky enemy position, but these riflemen are raw recruits. Some more experienced troops would come in handy...



Ah, GIs that have survived previous missions. The chevron under the squad symbol indicates these riflemen have gained one rank of 'Veterancy'.



This makes them fire quicker and more accurately. They cost more to build, but put the wind up Fritz and gain more experience as they progress.



We shouldn't laugh, but we did.



The Crocodile claims more victims.



There's base-building, but it's not a focus of the game.

Jean Michel Jarre's concerts get more elaborate every year.

again and move the camera down there. Just because you can.

The sound is also ace. We've already mentioned the booty-shaking explosions (is that the neighbours banging on the wall again?), but the rest is similarly riveting: rifle cracks, the scream of incoming rockets, the metallic trundle of tank tracks and some of the foulest language we've heard in a game all serve to add a welcome measure of atmosphere to the proceedings.

Like we said at the beginning of the review, this is an evolutionary step in the RTS genre, and one that, at least as far as this reviewer is concerned, is firmly in the right direction. Relic have focused on putting real-life tactics into real-time strategy, and not only that, they've made one of the finest-looking games of the year. And it's got tanks that shoot out flames. There have been lots of World War II RTS games, but this is the one that finally gives the subject matter its due – it's nothing short of brilliant. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Stunning levels of detail  
Sound Things asplode real good!  
Multiplayer Customisable eight-player skirmishes

- ✓ A real, tactical RTS
- ✓ Good AI
- ✓ Not prohibitively hard to play
- ✓ Flawless presentation
- ✓ Tanks that shoot flames!
- ✗ Won't appeal to sedate strategy fans

# 93

A hero, not a zero





# DUNGEON SIEGE II: BROKEN WORLD



"Heal the world, tuppence a bag," sings a confused *Jon Blyth*

**DEVELOPER** Gas Powered Games  
**PUBLISHER** 2K/Microsoft  
**WEBSITE**  
[www.dungeonsiege.com](http://www.dungeonsiege.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £14.99

## AT A GLANCE...

That's 20% more dungeon-crawling for half the price again. A 150% increase in hourly gameplay rates, on a per-right-click basis. Bargain.

## System requirements

2

## HOW IT STACKS

TITAN QUEST 81%

DUNGEON SIEGE II 80%

DUNGEON SIEGE II: BROKEN WORLD 62%

**I**N *DUNGEON SIEGE II*, you hunted down the saucy warlord Valdis and served him a sizey platter of what-for up a mountain. But, like all true heroes – I'm thinking mainly of *Ghostbusters* and the film's sequel (I still can't believe they got sued for their good work) – you can't expect thanks. Your battle has submerged the world into chaos, pissing everyone off – which, for the purposes of this game – will be conveyed by NPCs saying catty things while selling you a sword.

Everything you know from *DSII* is still here – pets, towns, teleporters, multiplayer, relentless waves of monsters and ambushes. Apart from more of the same, *Broken World* gives you two more character classes, with two new trees to snick your skill points into. The Blood Assassin and Fist Of Stone address the simplicity of *DSII*'s class system, by combining them slightly. Blood Assassin is a Ranger with spells, and the Fist Of Stone is a Warrior. With spells. There are also recipes, which let you prepare an enchanted robe using fenugreek leaves and basil. Oh, and there's a fifth race, the dwarves. Dwarves are ideal for the Fist Of

Stone class, and you can even take your dwarf back to *DSII*, if you're so inclined.

## SIMPLE PLEASURES

The problem lies, as it did with *DSII*, in the game's simplicity and ease. With loot, the simplicity is welcome. No-one needs the amount of worthless crap dropped in *Titan Quest*, and you're not bogged down with sifting through dozens of chipped helmets.

But the levels remain a set of crooked monster-strewn tubes, with recipe ingredients tucked away close to the walls and mini-bosses guarding areas just off the main path. No-one's saying that every game has to be as fenceless as *Oblivion*. But if you've seen the film *Oldboy*, then *Broken World* – like *DSII* – still feels like watching Oh Dae-su slog his way through that goon-filled corridor.

When progress is this straightforward – as dungeon-crawling games are, from *Diablo* to *Titan Quest* – you need a real sense of character development and cool-stuff accrual to keep you involved. And in the ten hours of play offered here, there's simply not that much to be added to what was offered in the original game.

If you own *Dungeon Siege II*, you'll already have your own opinions. I daresay you'll know if you want more of the same, in spite of my impotent bluster. So trust yourself, not some idiot reviewer who got over-excited about *Diablo* – the quest to find its equal seems doomed to eternal disappointment. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Unimproved  
 Sound Does the job  
 Multiplayer Yes boss

- ✓ All the good bits of *DSII*
- ✓ Extra classes and skills
- ✓ More of the same
- ✗ Uninspiring
- ✗ Unpretty
- ✗ More of the same

# 62

Siege mentality





## LMA MANAGER 2007

New season, new hopes... You fool

**DEVELOPER** Codemasters  
**PUBLISHER** Codemasters  
**WEBSITE** www.codemasters.co.uk/lma2007  
**ETA** September 22  
**PRICE** £19.99

### System requirements 2

**T**HIS IS GETTING ridiculous. It's now seemingly impossible for a football management game be sent in for review without it being accompanied by protestations that it's not trying to compete with *Football Manager*. What this actually means is: 'We know our game is nowhere near as good as *FM*, so please don't piss all over it.'

While *LMA07* isn't anywhere near *FM*'s league, it's a huge improvement over the risible *LMA Professional Manager 2005* and boasts a host of improvements that manage to make it a vaguely viable alternative to Sports Interactive's all-conquering series.

There's a decent number of leagues to be played, player stats are passable, while wheeling and dealing in the transfer market is a fairly entertaining affair. What's more, the presentation is slick and some great news reports help bring the world to life.

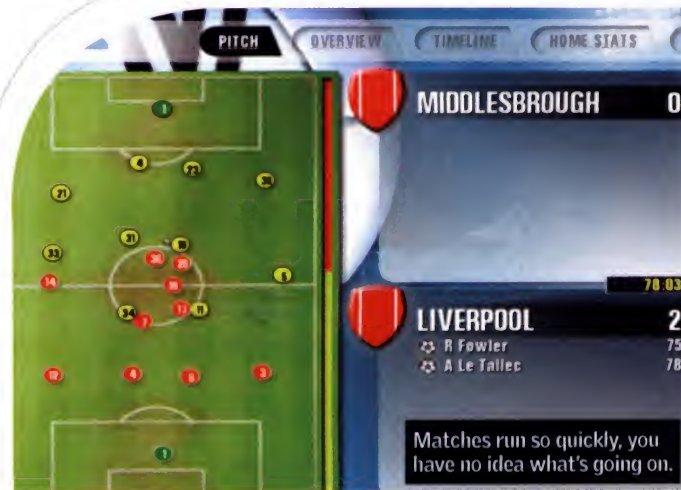


The basic team, tactical and training options are perfect for the less hardcore management enthusiast, despite the poor layout of player stats and the slightly clunky interface. In fact, it's not till you get on the pitch that the real problems arise.

While the 3D matches are vaguely novel for the first ten minutes and feature plenty of nice TV-coverage touches, you simply can't escape the feeling that your tactics – and more importantly your tactical changes – have little or no bearing on the proceedings. And after watching a few games, you soon realise that the action is about as thrilling as watching *The Dog & Twat* vs *The Hairless Badger Inn* on a rainy Sunday morning.

There's certainly some promise here, but even as an alternative to the *Football Manager* series, it still only just warrants your attention.

Martin Korda



## PREMIER MANAGER 2006-2007

If this were a Premiership manager, it'd be worse than Peter Reid

**DEVELOPER** Zoo Digital Publishing  
**PUBLISHER** Zoo Digital Publishing  
**WEBSITE** www.premiermanager.info  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99

### System requirements 1

**T**HE LAST TIME I was in this much pain was when I inadvertently snagged a cluster of densely-packed hairs while attempting to dislodge a nasal blockage with a pair of pliers. In fact, given the choice, I'd rather delve back into those murky depths with a hacksaw than play *Premier Manager 2006-2007* again.

Amateurish beyond belief, you'd need a review spanning four phone directories to just skim over the plague of faults that blights this wannabe management game. Yes, I know, I know, it's not trying to be *Football Manager*, but that doesn't excuse its utter ineptitude to provide anything even vaguely approaching a football management experience.

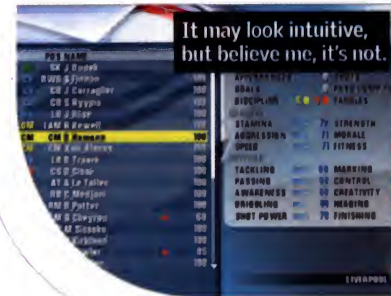
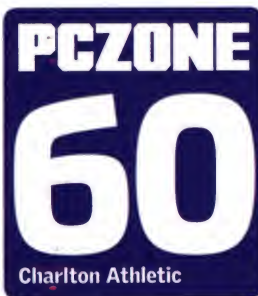
With its hideously clunky interface that sporadically stops working



(meaning you get stuck on one screen and have to quit out of the game), a basic match engine that, even on the slowest setting, runs so fast you may as well skip the matches entirely, and a shockingly inadequate tactics screen to boot, *Premier Manager 2006-2007* has to go down as one of the most threadbare and cack-handed management games of the year.

Sure, there's a smattering of nice touches, such as players letting you know how they feel about your decisions, but ultimately, there's virtually nothing here to recommend whatsoever. Do yourself a favour and don't fall out with your hard drive by contaminating it with this dross.

Martin Korda







## DROPTTEAM

### Excuse me, you've dropped your team

DEVELOPER TBG  
PUBLISHER Battlefront.com  
WEBSITE [www.battlefront.com](http://www.battlefront.com)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE \$45 download (£24)

System requirements **2**

**U**N**TIL DROPTTEAM**, I'D developed a strong nostalgia for manuals. Sure, I love playing through training levels – in fact, being told to crouch is my favourite thing ever – but for that fabled 'coming back from town with a new game on the bus' experience, nothing beats a ruddy great manual. Sid Meier knows it, as do Battlefront.

So you get a chubby 72-pager tucked into your box. A manual that reads like the developers are so pleased with what they've done, they want you to know all about every bit of it. Some of it's useful, but a lot of it's like showing your toilet paper to everyone to prove that you wiped, all by yourself.

I'm not saying that *DropTeam* – a kind of *Battlefield* team game without the infantry or the sense of fun – is awful, you understand. Although it



does look dated, and in Campaign mode, the bot AI may render your team members unable to follow simple waypoints, opting instead to slide down a hill and explode. However, there is a pervading sense of near-adequacy and muffled potential. Thoughtfulness without thrills. Far-future combat without that much in the way of cool technology. Online multiplayer without anyone, it seems, in the world playing.

Having bored myself to a kind of spiritual sadness in the Campaign mode, I tried out Standalone, which amounts to a single or multiplayer skirmish. It's better, but it's still like those nightmares where you're running upstairs with no feet. The multiplayer, where it's supposedly at, is hopelessly under-populated at all times of the day. While this could change with time, it's difficult to see why people would flock to a game so overwhelmingly unremarkable.

Jon Blyth



**PCZONE**  
**49**  
All drop, no team



## WARPATH

### Pariah gets some lipstick

DEVELOPER Digital Extremes  
PUBLISHER Groove Games  
WEBSITE [www.playwarpath.com](http://www.playwarpath.com)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £19.99

System requirements **2**

**T**HREE GROUPS OF people have found a nice planet, and no-one seems inclined to share it. So everyone agrees to kill each other, and that's where you join in. Hello.

Being made by the same team, it's an understatement to say that *WarPath* is from the same coop as *Pariah*. It's the product of a monogamous relationship between the same cock and hen. No – it's more like someone hid a chicken behind their back for 18 months then pulled it out again. "Nice new chicken, eh?" they say. "That's Henrietta," you reply. "I thought I'd lost her."

From the sound effects to that portable medical gadget, this game virtually *is* *Pariah*. The ammo boxes and the OK-that's-cool upgradeable weapons are all there, albeit with minor makeovers. Even the menus are utterly identical.



Not even the whispered suspicion of a shyly mooted tweak.

The single-player campaign has changed, however, into a series of not-very-intelligent bots populating a series of deathmatch, CTF and assault levels, leading to unlocked weapons (that are never locked in multiplayer mode) and a 'surprise' boss. The boss is anti-climactic – he has one weapon and it's a rubbish level – but when I left the computer mid-fight to get a cup of coffee, I'd lost 11-6 and was rewarded with victory. I've since rebranded 'walking away' as a 'wily plan'.

The multiplayer is what you'd expect; solid, if generic, shooting action around the levels that bored you in single-player. If you treat it as a few extra maps and a little makeover for *Pariah*, then fair enough. But pretending it's a new game is pretty cheeky.

Jon Blyth



**PCZONE**  
**60**  
Familiar much



# "GLAMOROUS HALF-NAKED BABES KUNG-FU FIGHTING

...SIT BACK, RELAX AND ENJOY"

ALAN JONES • FILM REVIEW

WANNA PLAY?

DOA

DEAD OR ALIVE

15 CONTAINS STRONG VIOLENCE

JAIME  
PRESSLY

HOLLY  
VALANCE

SARAH  
CARTER

NATASSIA  
MALTHE

DEVON  
AOKI

[www.deadoralivemovie.co.uk](http://www.deadoralivemovie.co.uk) [www.uip.co.uk](http://www.uip.co.uk)

TEXT PLAY TO 61661 TO GET THE DOA BABES SCREENSAVER ON YOUR PHONE

STANDARD NETWORK CHARGES APPLY

AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE SEPTEMBER 15

eat CINEMA | on DVD

CHECK LISTINGS FOR DETAILS

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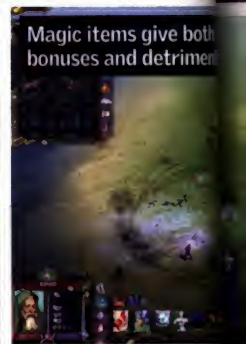




Pretty-boy Elf-hero Elfphant has a thing for older men.



Calling them treemen is racist; he's foliageably disadvantaged.



Magic items give both bonuses and detriment

# HEROES OF ANNIHILATED EMPIRES

Cobbled together from more stolen ideas than the US patent office, *HOAE* is a wobbling leviathan. **Dan Griliopoulos** wonders whether it will hold...



DEVELOPER GSC Game World  
PUBLISHER Deep Silver  
WEBSITE  
www.heroesofae.com  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £34.99



## AT A GLANCE...

Cyber-fantastical RPG/RTS with four factions battling it out. Level-up your heroes, build your cities and send your dragons against their tanks.

### System requirements

4

### HOW IT STACKS

RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS 91%

HEROES OF ANNIHILATED EMPIRES 82%

SPELLFORCE 2: SHADOW WARS 76%

**I**NITIALY, YOU'LL THINK this is the same old role-playing/strategy bobbins that *SpellForce* and *Warcraft III* made passable fists of. That is, to unravel a string of clichés, you'll think it falls between two stools, it's not one thing or the other, neither fish, fowl nor *Fallout Tactics*. However, *Heroes Of Annihilated Empires* surprised us; it's built a *Warcraft*/*Heroes Of Might & Magic* game over the *Cossacks* engine, introduced some innovative new bits and made something that's quite surprising...

Unusually, we're going to focus on the skirmish and multiplayer modes first. With the relatively short main campaign, these will probably be key for the life of the game. In skirmish and the seven-player multiplayer, you start with a choice; either focus on base-building or focus on levelling your hero up – it's that straightforward. Initially you're going to be disappointed because GSC have only supplied three maps in the pack. Throw in the fact that these modes are rather good and it's doubly disappointing.

If you do the base-building thing, you'll collect each of five resources with your peon units and use them to create buildings, which pump out warriors and upgrades. Holding the CTRL button orders infinite building of a particular unit; with armies this big, that's needed. You do have a hero in this

mode, but during the first 30 minutes of the game he or she is frozen, so can't level-up or affect the game.

## I NEED A HERO!

Do the hero thing and you pick from a ranger, warrior or mage, and level them up by using their magic powers to kill the various creeps around the map. The overpowered thug can learn new magic powers, pick up magic items, use magic potions, level-up, visit shops and so on. It basically crams all the bits of an RPG onto the left quarter of the screen. It's all done in a very simple interface, and the overall plan means you can have one superpowered hero with a small selection of supporting mercenaries fighting an entire upgraded opposing army comprising thousands. He might even win...

Campaign mode combines these two, like *Warcraft III*, but without losing anything. Far from overcomplicating the game, this all seems to fit together perfectly. Each hero levels up throughout the two campaigns, sometimes fighting alongside enormous armies, sometimes by himself. However, we didn't always understand what we were meant to be doing thanks to the lack of clear objectives. The initially well-rendered cut-scenes turned into passable strip cartoons, but didn't really explain what you were meant to be doing from mission to mission –

and the voice-acting can only be charitably interpreted as high camp.

Combat isn't the usual 'throw everyone into the meat grinder and hope a pie pops out' of other RTS titles. Enemy units can have key characters, banner holders, healers and resurrectors. Target these and the unit will crumble quickly; take a hands-off approach and the battle will be won by numbers and force; the typical meat grinder again. With an enormous variety of units and the customisable heroes, combat is never boring, and effective use of different tactics and different units can allow small forces to easily beat larger ones.

## MONSTER MASS

The four factions aren't enormously original (why the Tolkien Estate and Games Workshop are so non-litigious we don't know – there's an Eye Of Sauron, Ents and everything else in here), being basically Dwarves (mechanical magic), Elves (warmth), Undead (death) and Snowmen (cold), but they're nicely distinguished, nicely balanced and come complete with some neat units. As the units get larger, they turn into 3D models as opposed to the smaller sprites – but you seriously don't notice the difference when playing the game, thanks to the zoom limits – and they all look great.

Mentioning the zoom, even on the PC ZONE humungatron, zooming fully out





The Mechanics' tanks and cannons make short work of packed formations.



Are those nuclear tests? Or long-playing records?

## One superpowered hero and his band of mercenaries can take on an army of thousands – he might even win!

Sometimes this game's rather pretty.



Horsemen always have to be the centaur of attention.



"I'm so wonwey, so wewwey wonwey..."



## Expanding horizons

When 64,000 units just aren't enough...



Trouble with Aquador, is there's no Fire Brigade.

Being enormous fans of the *Heroes Of Might & Magic* series, *HOAE* is but the first instalment of a gloriously hubristic project on the part of GSC, to make a trilogy (at least) of fantasy games set in the, um, Aquador universe. As there are only two factions playable in the campaign of this game, it's likely that the other two will crop up in the campaign of the next instalment, which is also going to be an RTS/RPG. Or perhaps you'll be able to play them in an expansion pack (quite likely). In which case the mysterious Order Of The Blades may become a faction, or the other universes that the game's background documentation refers to may start breaching Aquador's spatio-temporal walls. After that, all the factions will definitely be playable, as GSC hopes to do a *WOW* and turn the franchise into an MMO and rake in the cash. Ahem, I mean, 'sate their artistic aspirations'.



A skeletal dragon shouldn't be able to fly! For so many reasons!

drops the frame-rate down to dangerous levels, and prompts anguished Scotty impressions ("She won't take much more of this!") from all watching. However, to see literally thousands of units at your command (GSC claim a theoretical ceiling of 64,000), you will need to zoom out to control them; even with only hundreds at your disposal, you swiftly lose control – and flying creatures in particular are nightmarish to handle.

*Heroes Of Annihilated Empires* is a massive improvement on *Cossacks* and its kin, and it's a real pleasure to play. The way GSC have adapted the engine to this completely different game style is really impressive and, with a bit more content and a bit less cheese, this would have knocked our pixie hats off. As it is, it's the nearest thing to a modern *Warcraft*, is actually fun and hence is deserving of rare praise. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Lush and clever  
Sound Unremarkable  
Multiplayer Good seven-player

- ✓ Fantastically familiar
- ✓ Actually works
- ✓ Massive numbers of units
- ✓ Decent tactics
- ✗ Limited game content
- ✗ Resource muncher

# 82

Our hero



You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our discs.

# indiezone



**Martin Korda whacks some balls, then cools off in the Norwegian snow**

## DREAM MATCH TENNIS PRO

DEVELOPER Bimboosoft WEBSITE [www.bimboosoft.com](http://www.bimboosoft.com) PRICE Price: \$19.95 (£11)

**TENNIS GAMES ONLY** ever seem to come in two forms – intuitive and arcadey or harder than a pebble sandwich made from three-month-old rye bread.

*Dream Match Tennis Pro* is an example of the latter, tasking you with not only moving your player to the exact position on the court required to return your opponent's shot, but also with timing your shot to perfection. Get it wrong and you look like a prize twat as the ball dribbles past your flailing racket.

Having reviewed its far more threadbare predecessor back in issue

160, *Dream Match Tennis Pro* provides just as much of a challenge and a multitude of new options, including an exhaustive World Tour.

Demanding in the extreme of both your hand/eye coordination skills and of your time, it's fun in its own vexing sort of way, and if you can be bothered to persevere, it does eventually become quite entertaining.

However, if spending hours swatting air isn't your thing, then do yourself a favour and opt for *Tennis Elbow* (issue 163, 65%) instead.

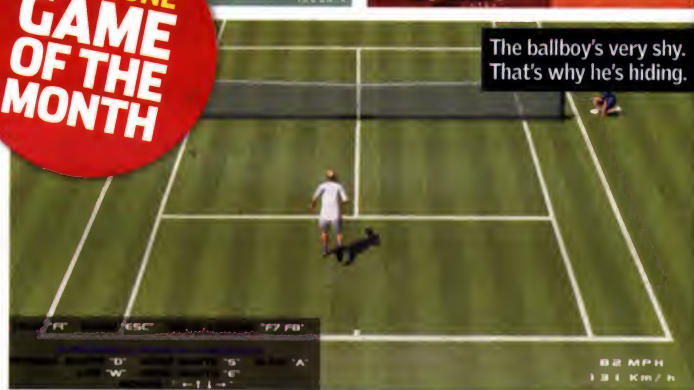


Play the game – British tennis needs you!



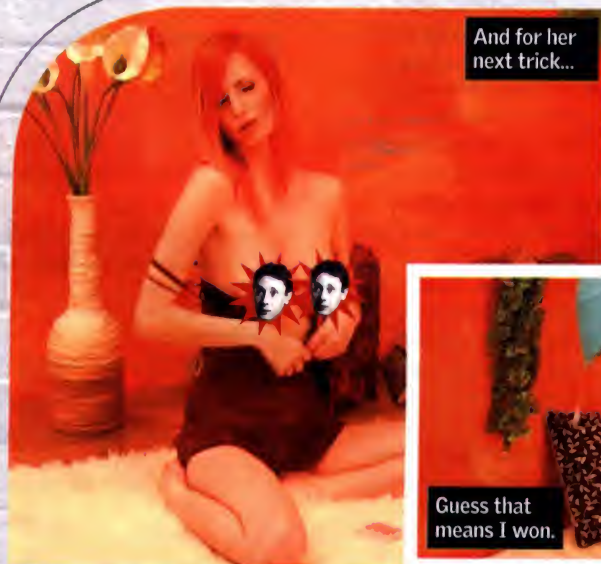
The game's even harder than the surface.

**INDIEZONE  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH**

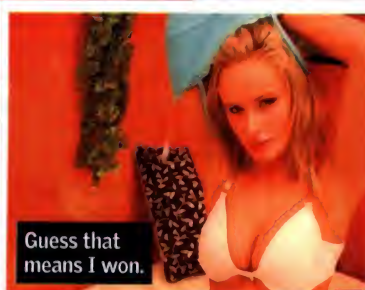


The ballboy's very shy. That's why he's hiding.

**PCZONE  
59**



And for her next trick...



Guess that means I won.

## VIDEO STRIP POKER SUPREME

DEVELOPER Torquemada Games WEBSITE [www.striptease-poker.com](http://www.striptease-poker.com) PRICE Euros 24.56 (£17)

**A FRIEND OF** mine has a saying: 'Never pay for porn.' It's a good point given how much free stuff there is out there (so I've been told). So why would you want to pay for

this, a strip poker game utilising Draw Poker rules in which you must undress a bevy of Eastern European beauties through a combination of bluffing, cunning and utter desperation to see their baps?

As poker games go, it's a fairly standard affair, though the hands do

often feel suspiciously weighted in your favour, prompting your opponent to sigh deeply in mock disappointment before flashing her minge at you and prompting you to pay for a sneak peek at her assets. Put it this way, if I was this good at poker in real life, I'd currently be sunning myself in Florida and wiping my arse with £50 notes.

Given the hefty price tag, it's hard to recommend this game to anyone other than wet-lipped spods (over the age of 18 of course) whose closest contact with a female was spraying one with puss while squeezing a zit at a bus stop. Laminate this page and save yourself some money.

**PCZONE  
47**



# GRASS ROOTS

DEVELOPER Mat Dickie WEBSITE [www.mdickie.com](http://www.mdickie.com) PRICE \$14.99 (£8)

**ONE-MAN DEVELOPMENT** team Mat Dickie is back once again, this time with a five-a-side footy sim replete with a (painfully trite) storyline and rudimentary character development.

After customising the look and skills of your character, you can either choose to play a one-off exhibition or penalty shoot-out in an array of varied locales (gym, park, beach), or embark on a mammoth campaign that takes you and your team on tour to challenge other like-minded five-a-side teams.

There are plenty of options and features that add interest, ranging

from the customisation of your team's formation on a basic and somewhat clunky tactics screen, to training your squad to become better players.

Sadly, the game trips over its own shoelaces once the matches kick off, as the action proves to be about as slick and exciting as an over-80s footie tournament – despite some half-decent opponent AI – with tackling a particular weakness. Adept it might be, but sadly, it's also pretty dull.

PCZONE  
50



# MY WORST DAY WW2

DEVELOPER MWD Games WEB [www.mwdgames.com](http://www.mwdgames.com) PRICE \$20 (£11)



**WHAT'S THIS?** A first-person shooter? In Indie Zone? It's bound to be a bit shit, right? Actually, it's not.

Rather than trying to compete with the twitch-trigger, eyeball-popping extravaganzas developed by the big boys, MWD Games have approached the genre from an entirely different angle.

Slowing the gameplay down to a pace that would have a snail burying its head in shame – and possessing loading times that can be timed in millennia rather than seconds – the game plants you in the middle of Norway during WWII with only your wits, a few weapons and a rough idea of what to do, then shoves you into the cold to work the rest out for yourself.

While *My Worst Day WW2*'s snow-covered locales may look uglier than a face that's been slapped by a barbed wire fence, it does possess a certain



tactical charm that makes up for the plodding play and lack of visual delights.

Forget glitzy explosions, manic firefights and short-lived levels, this is tactical first-person combat at its most hardcore.

If you're a highly patient military aficionado, chances are you just might like it.

PCZONE  
56

## Developer Q&A

### SUPER X STUDIOS

Name: James Thrush

Job Title: Owner

Company: Super X Studios

Website: [www.superxstudios.com](http://www.superxstudios.com)

Games: *For Gate*, *nvChess*, *Wild Earth Simulator Ride*, *Wild Earth: Photo Safari*



**PCZ** Tell us a bit about your latest game *Wild Earth: Photo Safari*?

**JT** "The idea came about when I took a sabbatical in Alaska. I thought it would be very interesting and compelling to create a simulation of a natural biosphere. The idea morphed into an actual game a few years later after playing a few minutes of *Pokémon Snap*. It was a perfect fit!"

**PCZ** What's your ethos towards making indie games?

**JT** "I always consider my competition to be the top games on the market, the ones by the big boys. I never allow myself to compromise quality just because I'm an independent developer."

**PCZ** What's the best thing about indie gaming?

**JT** "The freedom to design your

own games, to answer only to yourself and the customer, and to participate in every aspect of game development, from conceptualising to business management. Oops, that's three things. Well, there's just so much to love!"





# BUDGET

Games for less – there's no shame...

BUDGET  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH

## THE ELDER SCROLLS: MORROWIND

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE [www.mastertronic.com](http://www.mastertronic.com) PRICE £4.99

NOW THAT *OBVIOUSLY*'s out and soaking up so much criticism that it makes squelchy noises when it walks, *Morrowind*'s asking price has come right down to £4.99 – that's about one-third of the price of a ticket to London Zoo if you donate money to the monkeys.

Even if you've already played (or are still playing) *Oblivion*, its predecessor isn't without its advantages. Look past the dated graphics and pretend sword-fighting style and this game remains every bit as expansive and opportunistic as its prettier offspring. A better levelling system, an actual sense of danger when walking in the wilderness, a bigger wilderness and a crab which bought things off you – any *Elder Scrolls* fan will tell you exactly what *Morrowind* has over its more widely received successor.

Of course, if you haven't played an *Elder Scrolls* game, then this little budget bundle of joy is an essential

purchase. It might not be the better game, but it's worth far more than £4.99.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE  
90



"Have you got any Dr Pepper?"



"Asda? Nah, you're heading the wrong way mate."



Ah, the abandoned Dwemer mines. Memories!



"Is my hair going all up and stuff?"

THIS  
MONTH  
PCZONE  
SAVED MONEY BY...

Kevin using Clare's old mobile rather than buying his own:  
Saving: £130



Steve being too tight to upgrade his mobile:  
Saving: £170

Log not being able to make any calls because his phone didn't work for a week:  
Saving: £3



## TOTAL OVERDOSE

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE [www.mastertronic.com](http://www.mastertronic.com) PRICE £9.99

WITH A SET-UP that's ostensibly *GTA* in a sombrero where you can do back-flips, *Total Overdose* was largely ignored when first flung into the treacherous waters of gaming.

Forever damned by its *GTA*-lite tag, *Total Overdose*'s interesting melding of the *Tony Hawk*'s point system with *Max Payne*'s third-person in-flight slo-mo kills were largely lost to time immemorial. Did this change the world? Will gamers meet in shadowy corners of the Internet ten years hence to mourn one who delivered so much, yet was so cruelly unappreciated?

Well, no. Not at all really. You see, the good ship *GTA* dwarves the car-jackings and ramp-based silliness of *TO* to such an extent that all the interesting

stuff becomes somewhat lost in the mire. Yes, you're provided with enough Mexican violence and occasional giggles to wile away an hour or two of an evening, but whether you'll actually be able to remember anything notable about it the next day is doubtful in the extreme.

Will Porter



Holy tacos!

PCZONE  
60



TO: totally over.



# CONFLICT: GLOBAL STORM

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE [www.mastertronic.com](http://www.mastertronic.com) PRICE £9.99

**HAVING A BIT** of a war on terror are we? Yeah? Eliminating third-generation Nazis in the jungles of South America is it? You'll be having some of those squad-based strategy elements won't you? The ability to control one of four team members I bet. A few vehicles to drive with lots of weapons and explosions I bet. Infuriating AI bugs? That'll do you won't it? The feeling of being a sub-par squad game which belongs on a console anyway, yeah? Superseded by *Advanced Warfighter* is it? Looks like it and all.

Terrorism is becoming so passé now that games like this, despite having a guy who looks like Simon Pegg on your squad, are becoming slightly monotonous. *Conflict: Global Storm* does an alright job of keeping you on your toes though, with action and set-pieces bringing home the exploding bacon. It's aged really badly

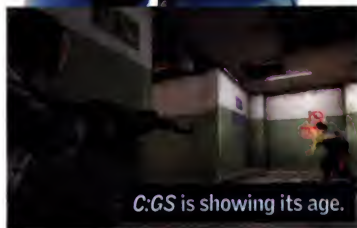
though. Just look at it. Jeez. And those checkpoint-only saves will give you testicular hernias through utter frustration.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE  
56



You know what they say.  
Big gun = big bullets.



C:GS is showing its age.

# RICHARD BURNS RALLY

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE [www.mastertronic.com](http://www.mastertronic.com) PRICE £4.99

**DESPITE THE OBVIOUS** similarities to *Colin McRae Rally* (well, they are both rally titles), *RBR* bears as much resemblance to the Scot's rally title as a fluffy kitten does to a cacodemon.

*RBR* re-defines the word hardcore by focusing firmly on the simulation side of things and as such, makes you crash more often than you would on the way back from a heavy night down the pub. You'll need to ditch the *Sega Rally* or *CMR*-style

of driving fairly quickly, or you're pretty much guaranteed not to make it round the first corner. However, if you can get your head around it, you'll find that *RBR* offers a wealth of highly taxing but rewarding rallying. The graphics may look a little flaky, but it's still one of the only realistic rallying titles around.

Suzu Wallace

PCZONE  
70



As Pulp once sang,  
this is hardcore.

50 points for a man in  
a luminous jacket...



Prepare to crash -  
quite a lot.



## And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or hell)



**STARSHIP TROOPERS**  
£9.99, XPLOSIIV

How fast a game goes to budget is a good indicator of its quality, so it's no surprise to see *Starship Troopers* in here already - a wealth of alien critters can't begin to make up for its poor graphics, sluggish handling and dodgy AI.

PCZONE  
37



**FORD RACING 2 & 3 DOUBLE PACK**  
£9.99, XPLOSIIV

Essentially a virtual showroom for Dagenham's finest, the *Ford Racing* titles are simple yet enjoyable additions to the mass of driving titles on the market. They're hardly the best thing on four wheels, but then, neither is a Ford...

PCZONE  
59



**HEROES OF MIGHT AND  
MAGIC III & IV DOUBLE-PACK**  
£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

The popular *HOMM* franchise is knocking on a bit, and despite the gameplay here still being great, both titles are now hopelessly outdated - only buy it if you want some old-school kicks.

PCZONE  
56

## PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1

**FAR CRY**

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

Better than *HL2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI.



2

**BEYOND GOOD & EVIL**

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Glorious story-telling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in gaming-dom make *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



3

**THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK:  
ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY**

£9.99, BESTSELLER

Great melee, sneaky stealth and oodles of lawless violence - not all console conversions are a pile of old poo.



4

**MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR -  
GOLD EDITION**

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

A true classic, *Medieval* lets troops do battle in real-time and lets you get tactical in this warfare masterpiece.



5

**SPLINTER CELL:  
CHAOS THEORY**

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Tense, brooding gameplay and original multiplayer, *Chaos Theory* has the best stealth action around.





## YOUR SHOUT!

Got something to say?  
Write in and tell us...

### YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

Agree? Disagree? Well, the world wouldn't be the wonderful place it was if we all thought the same way. If you fancy sharing your own thoughts with your fellow readers, then jot them down (we find the recent advancements in parchment and ink technology to be handy), trim the amount of words to a MAXIMUM of 100, add a score out of 100 then send them to the address below. If we think they're worthy of sharing, we'll print them here. Better yet, if your letter is selected as our Review Of The Month, you'll be showered with a gift of some description.

Send your reviews to: [yourshout@pczone.co.uk](mailto:yourshout@pczone.co.uk), or stick them in an envelope and post them to: PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NW.

### THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

OUR SCORE: 95%

I was gutted to find the much hyped *Oblivion* paled into insignificance compared to *Morrowind*. Don't get me wrong – the graphics are gorgeous but the game content lacks depth. All the quests are shorter and there are less spells; training is restricted to so much per level and escaping enemies and arrest is harder. After 13 trips through the *Oblivion* gates I'm bored, bored, bored and never want to enter another one. The game and the strategy guide cost me nearly £50. I wish I'd invested the money instead on hardware to increase the RAM on my computer. And I'm not buying the T-shirt!

Jane Mutter: **52%**

### THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

OUR SCORE: 86%

I fancy myself as a bit of a gaming connoisseur, and have been enjoying gaming delights since the days of plumbbers, mushrooms and flowers that let you spit fire, plus I played a bit of Nintendo back then. Anyway, it takes a lot to please me now – I even found *Half-Life 2* a bit samey. I liked *Splinter Cell*, especially the bits where you could act all cool and stealth-like. I also like swearing and being able to 'shiv' people who disrespect me, but that can only be done in *Escape From Butcher Bay* and some parts of Essex. If, like me, you haven't been compelled to finish a game (*F.E.A.R.* stands for Fecking Excrement Arse Rubbish), then buy this

## Review of the month

So you didn't agree with us then?



### HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC V

OUR SCORE: 80%

Riddle me this: in a strategy game such as *Heroes Of Might & Magic V*, what's the most critical element? It's traditionally not been the graphics, so it comes as a pleasant surprise to find some good 3D graphics and animation in this title. But most would say that good level design and balancing are the keys to a superior strategy game – and sadly in this regard, *HOMMV* is woefully lacking.

Don't get me wrong: the elements for an excellent game are all there. The gameplay is addictive and creatures inventive (though the piss-poor story and voice-acting are par for the course). It seems to tick all the boxes that a good strategy title needs. However, the level design is like an untested, half-finished mod – it's either way too easy for the first campaign, or way too hard for the following campaigns.

Can I recommend this game? About as much as I can recommend banging your head against a brick wall. Frankly, I feel violated – it's as if Ubisoft has mugged me and left me to bleed, and I suspect I'm not the only one.

Daniel Polwarth: **45%**

game and be prepared to then buy yourself some black goggles, a gym membership and hurt yourself playing around in the dark. Buy this game – it's cheap and it's class.

David Allen: **92%**

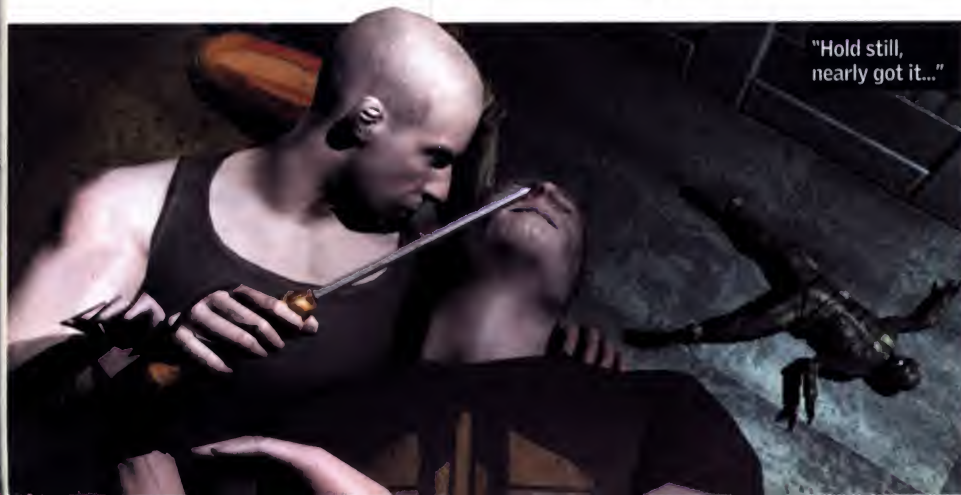
### PREY

OUR SCORE: 86%

Looking very *Doom 3* and arriving just as the PC community is drooling over *Crysis*, what can a simple FPS offer now? A hell

of a lot, as it happens. *Prey* throws something new at you every few minutes. From the best game beginning ever – (*Don't Fear*) *The Reaper* is genius – through seamless portals to *Descent*-style shuttle sections, I was not only happy to keep blasting my way through to the end, I actually started caring about the characters and the world. Pity there wasn't more environment interaction or better enemy AI, though.

Chris Capel: **87%**



"Hold still, nearly got it..."

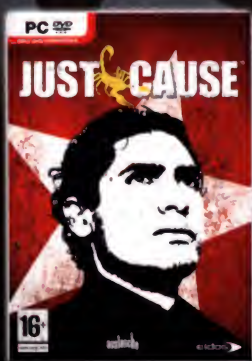


Fancy falling into a burning ring of fire?





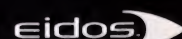
# JUST CAUSE™



www.pegi.info



PlayStation 2



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# BUYER'S GUIDE



The bestest games your money can buy...

## PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES BEGINNING WITH E

- 1 **ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION**  
PCZ ISSUE: 167
- 2 **EF2000**  
PCZ ISSUE: 31
- 3 **EVERQUEST II**  
PCZ ISSUE: 150
- 4 **ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**  
PCZ ISSUE: 117
- 5 **ECSTATICA**  
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## PCZONE TOP 5 GREAT MOVIE-TO-GAME CONVERSIONS

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PCZ ISSUE: 137
- 2 **ALIEN VS. PREDATOR 2**  
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- 3 **LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH**  
PCZ ISSUE: 149
- 4 **INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS**  
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- 5 **BLADE RUNNER**  
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## PCZONE TOP 5 CRAP MOVIE-TO-GAME CONVERSIONS

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- 3 **X-MEN 2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE**  
PCZ ISSUE: 130
- 4 **BAD BOYS 2**  
PCZ ISSUE: 143
- 5 **THE DUKES OF HAZZARD: RACING FOR HOME**  
PCZ ISSUE: 93



## Shooters

**Must buy!**



**HALF-LIFE 2**  
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



**BATTLEFIELD 2**  
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.



**FAR CRY**  
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



**HL2: EPISODE ONE**  
PCZ Issue: 170 - 91%

Suffering slightly from thematic overlap from *HL2*, *Ep One* nevertheless contains the greatest moments from the entire *HL* series. Warm, funny and thrilling, it may be short, but the first five minutes are worth the entry fee alone.



**CALL OF DUTY 2**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. World War II at its unforgiving best.



**F.E.A.R.**  
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Revenge* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



**PREY**  
PCZ Issue: 170 - 86%

*Prey* hits the PC after an 11-year wait and proves to be a filthy-gorgeous organic sci-fi shooter with fantastic weapons, scenery and monsters. Not the best combat, but stuffed full of original ideas.

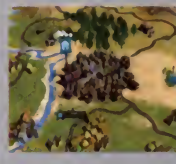
## Strategy

**Must buy!**



**ROME: TOTAL WAR**  
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



**CIVILIZATION IV**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



**RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS**  
PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and *Total War* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation and imagination.



**LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH**  
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



**SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II**  
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



**RISE OF NATIONS**  
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of empire-builders, *Rise of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones and Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



**STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR**  
PCZ Issue: 166 - 86%

A brilliant real-time tactical map and amazing space conflicts makes *Empire At War* the best *Star Wars* RTS ever. It's only let down by its land battles - otherwise, it's beyond reproach.

## Action/Adventure

**Must buy!**



**MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE**  
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



**GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS**  
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smooth, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



**SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY**  
PCZ Issue: 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs. mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



**FAHRENHEIT**  
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



**PSYCHONAUTS**  
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



**BEYOND GOOD & EVIL**  
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



**PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES**  
PCZ Issue: 164 - 86%

The shirtless wonder finally makes it into the Buyer's Guide, not that any of his outings can be considered bad games. *TTT* manages to get all the ingredients just right this time.



## MMOs



**MUST BUY!**  
**WORLD OF WARCRAFT**  
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%  
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



**EVERQUEST II**  
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%  
A Star Trek to WoW's Star Wars, EQII gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



**GUILD WARS**  
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%  
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



**EVE ONLINE**  
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%  
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



**CITY OF HEROES**  
PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%  
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

## Simulation



**MUST BUY!**  
**X3: REUNION**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%  
Finally, a space sim to better X2: The Threat, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



**IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES**  
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%  
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT**  
PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%  
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



**BUDGET**  
**FREELANCER**  
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%  
If X2 is too slow for you, Freelancer should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



**FALCON 4.0**  
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%  
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, Falcon 4.0 lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

## Driving/Racing



**MUST BUY!**  
**GT LEGENDS**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%  
While GTR takes care of modern-day racing, GT Legends does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to Grand Prix Legends, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



**GTR**  
PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%  
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



**LIVE FOR SPEED**  
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%  
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



**NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED**  
PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%  
Thrill-packed racer from EA, this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like Westwood with the car pinging though.



**TOCA RACE DRIVER 3**  
PCZ Issue: 165 - 85%  
If you're into cars, this is about as essential as petrol. With a massive collection of 35 motorsport genres, a great damage engine and realistic tracks, there's plenty of mileage in this superb racer.

## God games



**MUST BUY!**  
**THE MOVIES**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%  
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



**BLACK & WHITE 2**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%  
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



**BUDGET**  
**BLACK & WHITE**  
PCZ Issue: 150 - 90%  
Lionhead's controversial vision brought out your good/bad side and featured an ambitious mix of role-playing, strategy and great AI. It can now be yours for a mere fiver, making it a god among mortals.



**EVIL GENIUS**  
PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%  
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



**VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG**  
PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%  
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

## Sport



**MUST BUY!**  
**PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%  
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of Pro Evo ever, also the best footy game ever.



**FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%  
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



**TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%  
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. Tiger 06 is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



**NHL 06**  
PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%  
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent ball-out fun for the whole family.



**MADDEN 2005**  
PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%  
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

## RPGs



**MUST BUY!**  
**THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION**  
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%  
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



**BUDGET**  
**KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC**  
PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%  
KOTOR is the best Star Wars game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



**BUDGET**  
**THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**  
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%  
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of Morrowind remains a remarkable achievement.



**DEUS EX**  
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%  
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain Deus Ex as the alpha male of the gaming world.



**NEVERWINTER NIGHTS**  
PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%  
It may not have the depth of Fallout, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game!

## INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

### September & October

BATTLEFIELD 2142  
BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS  
CAESAR 4  
CALL OF JUAREZ  
DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC  
DEFCON  
FACES OF WAR  
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007  
GOTHIC 3  
GTR 2  
JUST CAUSE  
LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY  
MAELSTROM  
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2  
RESERVOIR DOGS  
SAM & MAX  
SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT  
STRONGHOLD LEGENDS  
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - DARK CRUSADE

EA  
THQ  
VU GAMES  
ASCARON/93 GAMES  
UBISOFT  
INTROVERSION  
UBISOFT  
SEGA  
JOWOOD  
ATARI  
EIDOS  
ACTIVISION  
CODEMASTERS  
ATARI  
EIDOS  
TELLTALE GAMES  
UBISOFT  
2K GAMES  
THQ

### Late 2006

F.E.A.R.: EXTRACTION POINT  
LOTR: BFME2 - THE RISE OF THE WITCH-KING  
MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR  
NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON  
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE  
RESIDENT EVIL 4  
SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS  
STAR TREK: LEGACY  
TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED  
THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR  
WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS  
THE WITCHER  
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

VU GAMES  
EA  
SEGA  
EA  
SEGA  
UBISOFT  
VU GAMES  
BETHESDA  
ATARI  
CODEMASTERS  
DEEP SILVER  
CD PROJEKT  
VU GAMES





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## Soft spot

**W**HILE MUCKING AROUND with ZyXEL's 660HW-T1 wireless modem router (see p99), I was reminded of a 'feature' common to all company's products that's so breathtakingly stupid it could almost be the handiwork of a disgruntled employee.

It's the way any ZyXEL router's name and revision number are incorporated into the log-in screen, meaning anyone trying to bust into your network from outside will know straight away what hardware you're using to try and keep them out. All that's missing is the firmware version.

I've half a mind to make a little button which says, 'Click here to search for vulnerabilities', and then email it to ZyXEL with a suggestion that they stuff it somewhere dark and stinky. Of course, ZyXEL will hit straight back, claiming that the model name displayed so prominently helps with technical support calls (though how many calls are from people whose PCs are out of joint because some bastard hacked into their router, we'll never know).

My only advice is that me and my fellow ZyXEL owners make sure our passwords are not only strong, but are updated regularly. That means using combinations of letters and numbers which do not form regular English words – your home phone number or favourite football team are not good enough. I'm always amazed at how many Friends Reunited accounts you can log into with the word 'arsenal'.

*Handy*

Phil Wand, hardware editor

## QUAD HIKE

## Four-core platforms due from Intel and AMD

**NOT LONG AFTER** Intel announced its FX-beating Core 2 Extreme processor, AMD hit back with talk of a new technology with two sockets for two of its dual-core processors. Dubbed 4x4, the paired CPU system will incorporate two independent memory controllers to effectively double its data throughput.

Now though, Intel has released plans for the first true quad-core processor, a Core 2 Extreme based around two dual-core Conroes. Although clocking slower than the current dual-core product, the new Extreme is likely to feature 8MB of L2 cache and will leave the bus speed unchanged at 1066MHz.

But although the idea of four processors on one chip is an exciting prospect for gamers, nobody knows how long it will take for this technology to filter down to more affordable mainstream products.

In addition, it's not clear how quickly the current dual-core Core 2 Extreme will become obsolete. Intel has promised a 3.2GHz variant within a few months, but roadmaps suggest that this and the existing 2.93GHz dual-core Extremes will be replaced at the beginning of next year with quad-core alternatives.

And what about price? With the present Core 2 Extreme breaking £800, the new quad-cores are likely to break the bank.



Four cores, one chip.

Shuttle's SD37P2 is as rapid as it is small.



## SHUTTLE HUSTLE

## Small is indeed beautiful

**WITH A 400W** power supply, two PCI-E slots, ten USB 2.0 and two FireWire ports, SATA 300 RAID, Gigabit LAN, 7.1 surround audio, support for up to 8GB RAM and any Core 2 Duo processor, you'd think that Shuttle had switched to making full towers.

But the XPC SD37P2 is actually a small aluminium box measuring just 32.5x22x21cm, and is the fastest machine of its type. The Intel 975X Express-based unit will cost around £285 when it goes on sale soon, and will be an ideal choice for wealthy gamers looking to keep a low profile. [www.shuttle.com](http://www.shuttle.com)

## NEWS ROUND-UP

ATI's R600 and NVIDIA's G80 DX10 chips look set for release next year rather than at Christmas. Almost nothing is known about the new GeForce, save that it will use GDDR-4 – hardly a surprise, given that the Radeon X1950 XTX is already using the memory. As for the R600, rumours suggest the GPU will feature 64 actual pipelines – in comparison, the current Radeons have 16. [www.ati.com](http://www.ati.com)

Ofcom has made it easier for users to switch Internet providers after complaints from broadband users. As many of you will know, getting a migration code (MAC) from your ISP is often stressful. The problem is that an ISP is actually under no obligation to provide you with a MAC; that's now changing. [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

CNET News.com reported that Dell has more than 1 million Dimension desktops and 800,000 notebooks with AMD processors due through its manufacturing facilities – if true, that's 15% of its desktop business and 20% of its total laptop business. Just a shame, really, that gamers now want Intel hardware. [www.dell.co.uk](http://www.dell.co.uk)

**WARNING:**  
THIS MONTH'S  
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

**MATROX:** A budget porno in which a sexy matron realises the world is a virtual reality and she actually exists in a dark future populated with sexy lesbian androids known as lesboids. **XILENCE:** What it says on the wall of the library in the X-Men's base, next to 'Xoilets'. **DELL DIMENSION:** A bizarre world which lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. Outsources its call-centres to Bangladesh. **UPNP:** What happens soon after U Drink n Drink. **STRIPED ARRAY:** The most expensive thing at the Mr Fishy takeaway, depending on availability.





# AURORA M9700

PRICE £1,859 MANUFACTURER Alienware WEBSITE [alienware.co.uk](http://alienware.co.uk)

**AS WITH ALL** Alienware machines, the Aurora m9700 has courted its fair share of controversy since release. Many say they love the way it looks, but are horror-struck by the price. Several hate the design, but could live with it for the performance. Some say they'd rather spend their money on five nights at the Royal Bahamian in Nassau, and a small number lick the screen.

I'm somewhere in the middle. That luminescent alien face, those Giger-like plastic gills and the silly stippled paint all make it a bit passé; a bit yesterday's sci-fi. And while still recognisable as a fast and exclusive gaming tool, I can't help thinking that Alienware would sell to a wider range of people if their style wasn't quite so cyberpunk hacker.

That said, the Aurora certainly packs in the features. There's a wide array of

slots and holes and interfaces dotted about, including DVI and VGA, S-Video in/out, four USB 2.0 ports, FireWire and the obligatory 4-in-1 card reader. Onboard audio offers support for surround-sound, and there's both wireless and Bluetooth. There are two things that annoy: one, the DVD drive is in the wrong place (at the front, where it's easy to nudge the eject button); and two, the touchpad and touchpad buttons are too big and too shiny.

## CORE BLIMEY

And while it's fast, the Aurora never quite lives up to its price tag. Its performance equates roughly with the old Pentium M 760, and is some way behind any Core Duo. Given that there's no way of specifying anything other than a single-core Turion, the m9700 seems not much more than a braggart's toy: fashion and glamour rather than technology and power.

Except, of course, it's actually the world's first SLI notebook. The model you see here came specified with a duo of Go 7900 GS cards with 10,000 points on offer in 3DMark05, and almost 6,000 in 3DMark06. It's capable of a steady 100fps in Source at both 1280x1024 and at its native 1920x1200; there's a granite-smooth 90fps in *Doom 3*. Crank up the effects processing and there's precious little change in speed. It is, however, oddly jerky in *Oblivion* and *Battlefield 2*; something that would change had the review unit been specified with 2GB RAM and 7200rpm drives in a striped array.

What's disappointing about SLI is that if you unscrew the screws and physically remove one of the GeForce cards, the Aurora's performance is unaltered. The Turion is clearly something of a bottleneck, and you should thus save your money and avoid SLI, or wait until Alienware allow you to specify a dual-core engine to help it along.

## SPECIFICATION

Processor AMD Turion 64 ML 44 (2.4GHz) Screen 17-inch 1920x1200 Clearview Wireless RealTek b/g Graphics 1 256MB GeForce Go 7900 GS Graphics 2 256MB GeForce Go 7900 GS RAM 1GB DDR SDRAM HDD 1 80GB 5400 RPM SATA Optical 1 DVD-SuperMulti USB 4 x 2.0 ports Sound Stereo (with surround support) OS Windows XP Home Weight 3.9kg Warranty 12 months

And there you have it. The Aurora is a curious mix of cutting-edge and old hat; of clever features and annoying faults. The biggest disappointment is the mismatch of supreme graphical power with a mediocre processor, meaning benchmark results which are good rather than staggering. Once again, the advice is to go Core Duo. **PCZ**







## P660HW-T1 BUNDLE

PRICE £46 MANUFACTURER ZyXEL WEBSITE [www.zyxel.co.uk](http://www.zyxel.co.uk)

**T**HE P660HW IS one of ZyXEL's older modem routers, and the company's website has firmware for it dating back at least two centuries. It's also an exceedingly robust, reliable and well-supported product, and I've been using one without bother for longer than I can recall.

It was therefore something of a shock to discover that the new T1 version, launched years after the original and now targeted at home users, looks and feels exactly the same. Virtually nothing has changed. Even the Web configuration remains typically ZyXEL, which is to say that it's esoteric, not pretty and aggressively unintuitive. The company really needs to take a look at how rivals do things before aiming at non-techies.

I've also found the T1 is flakier than before. Where its predecessor would chew happily on the data from busy torrents, the new one gets confused. Pings to remote servers start going unanswered, and the interface slows to an unusable crawl. Hit the network with high-bandwidth multicast – something that more home users are doing these days – and there's a high chance it'll just lock up and die.

But I'm not going to be too hard on it. You do get a decent firewall, content filtering, rudimentary bandwidth management, VPN pass-through and great support from a trusted name. ZyXEL releases regular updates to keep bugs in check, and the low price – £30 less than the old version – includes a USB wireless adaptor and is seriously good value.

PCZONE



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## NAVIGATOR 805 GUARD

PRICE £19 MANUFACTURER Genius WEBSITE [geniusnet.co.uk](http://geniusnet.co.uk)

**P**ROMISING '15 MONTHS' battery up to', this clicker is a cut-price wireless laser device with bi-directional scrolling and security button to 'lock your private'.

Genius clearly spends as much on language translation as it does on quality plastics. But while the brand's budget charm is never normally an issue, the Navigator 805 Guard will make you wish you'd spent that little bit extra on a Logitech. Which is a real shame.

By default, the driver installs a system tray utility to check your email (er, why?) and the button which claims to 'lock my private' simply disables the keyboard. Would it not have been easier to trigger the security screen built into Windows?

The biggest problem is that the Genius drivers not only give you precious little control over the pointer speed, they also remove XP's enhanced precision option and the screen feels disconnected from your hand. Cheap and cheerless.



PCZONE



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## XILENCE CASE FAN

PRICE £4 MANUFACTURER Xilence WEBSITE [xilencepower.com](http://xilencepower.com)

**D**ON'T LET THE goofy spelling of 'silence' put you off: these budget-priced case fans are deliciously quiet, yet shift enough air to keep the busiest of machines cool.

My media server's fans made a noise like a banshee stuck in a tree mulcher, and the constant whirr drove the household nuts during the July heatwave. A promise to my other half that I would do something about my noisy geek vacuum cleaner resulted in a late-night visit to the QuietPC.com webby.

The Xilence range was cheapest and thus instantly appealing; the fact they were Chinese and probably made in sweatshops didn't bother me, so I stuffed a range of fan sizes into my basket and checked out.

A box turned up two days later and to my great relief the server is now a mute version of its former self. Recommended.

### SPECIFICATION

Power Consumption 0.84W Rated Current 0.07A  
Fan Speed 1500rpm Bearing Type Hydro  
Max. Airflow 19.6CFM Noise Level 15dB

PCZONE



87



# HOW TO... PLAY GAMES ON MULTIPLE SCREENS

## Need:

Matrox TripleHead2Go,  
three screens

## Time:

10 minutes

## Difficulty level:



Phil Wand

HAL 9000

Medium doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

You like your games in surround sound – but what about surround vision? *Phil Wand* wraps himself in LCDs...

**W**E HUMANS HAVE a panoramic field of view, and yet what we enjoy every evening occupies a mere fraction of our total vision. While we're staring at *Counter-Strike* on a 17-inch screen, our 180-degree brains are frittering away processing power on everything else in the room: yesterday's cup of tea and a half-eaten chocolate digestive; two dozen signed photos of Johnathan 'Wendy' Fatality (£1.49 on eBay); and a teetering pile of CDs filled with crap

American porn and stupid Japanese cartoons. What a waste.

Blocking out this rubbish and submersing yourself in the action has been a dream ever since people first played *Doom* back in 1993. We've had some multi-screen tasters since that time – Sega's *Ferrari F355 Challenge* arcade cabinet being the most memorable – but the technology has always fallen short.

Or has it? Read on to find out how a £199 gadget launched earlier this year has made everyone's dream come true...



## 01 The Matrox TripleHead2Go



TripleHead2Go might sound like something on the speciality menu at a Reeperbahn brothel, but it's actually a video converter which allows you to connect up to three 19-inch monitors to your PC for a combined widescreen resolution of 3840x1024 pixels. There are currently 165 games – ranging from *Total Annihilation* to *World Of Warcraft* and *Oblivion* – which support the Matrox gadget, and give you a glorious 135-degree field of view across a combined screen area as wide as most desks.

Little box, big results.

## 02 Choose your weapons

Fight the urge to save money – don't buy three value-branded LCD screens. Do, however, make sure you buy narrow bezel products – ones which have only a narrow plastic frame around the glass.

If you want 17-inch, go for our Buyer's Guide favourite £150 ViewSonic VE710s. If you fancy 19-inch, my choice would be the £250 ViewSonic VP930 or £220 VX922. Choosing the VP930 makes your total spend £750, which is still some way short of Dell's £1,500 UltraSharp3007WFP – a 30-inch, widely-acclaimed, monster panel capable of 2560x1600. So TripleHead2Go isn't actually bad value.



Most people would be happy with just one VP930.



TripleHead2Go is not a graphics card. It splits a single display from your PC to three monitors. You don't even need to open your case to use it. You will, however, need a powerful processor and video card to get the best from it: you also need one which is compatible with Matrox hardware and Matrox utility software. Google for Matrox TripleHead2Go System Compatibility Tool to find out if your system will work before you buy. You can find the TripleHead2Go available online for about £199 through any shopping comparison site such as [froogle.google.co.uk](http://froogle.google.co.uk) or [nextag.co.uk](http://nextag.co.uk). At the time of writing, Micro Direct had the Matrox gizmo on special offer at just £178. The TripleHead2Go features a two-year warranty and requires Windows XP or 2000. It's supplied with a DVI-VGA cable, a VGA-VGA cable, a power adaptor and utilities.



## 03 Get connected

You'll be relieved to hear that the triple-screen system takes moments to hook up. Make sure your three monitors are arranged next to each other at the same height on your desk, and that their cables are labelled left, centre and right accordingly. Connect their cables to the ports on the TripleHead2Go box, connect the supplied

power adaptor to the mains, and then connect the output from your PC's video card. When you start Windows, you'll be using just the central screen. Install the Matrox software, right-click on the desktop, choose Properties, open the Settings tab and drag that slider right the way across. Hey presto, 3840x1024 desktop.

Easy, peasy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob diseasey.



## Save your money: Dualhead2go



Three's company, two's a crowd.

TripleHead2Go is based on a product Matrox released last year called DualHead2Go. Like its more recent triple-screen sibling, the dual-screen version allows you to connect a duo of monitors to your PC and run at up to 2560x1024 resolution. It's cheaper, and you don't need to lash out as much money on LCDs, but there is a problem – push two panels together and the centre of your desktop is obscured by their bezels. Although it's possible to re-arrange your applications around this problem, it's a nightmare to play games. So don't think you're clever by buying the cheaper version. Save up for the TripleHead2Go.

## 04 Configure your games

To make your games work, Matrox supplies a tool called the Surround Gaming Utility. This automatically updates any game from a list of supported titles – there are almost

170 – to enable the ultra-widescreen resolutions. All you need do is select the appropriate title from the list, click Optimise, then run the game. The central screen is configured to

provide your forward vision, and the image on the side screens is warped slightly to give you that wrap-around feeling. In most games, the TripleHead2Go works brilliantly.



Suddenly, RTS games make a whole lot more sense.

## Rose-tinted surround specs

Let's be honest, the TripleHead2Go isn't a perfect solution. To start with, it's incompatible with a surprisingly large number of Radeon cards, including mine – you'll need to download the TripleHead2Go System Compatibility Tool from the Matrox website to find out if you're in the same boat. And if you are, the system is simply no good to you.

There's also the fact that, because of the way the image on the left and right panels has its perspective deliberately warped, any menus or text

you encounter on the edge of the display are going to look slightly odd. It's not enough to ruin the effect, but it doesn't look right.

And lastly you're going to need some serious computing power to push 3840x1024 pixels around the screen. While you can configure your TripleHead2Go to run at a lesser resolution, there's little point – if you're going to spend close to £1,000 on the set-up, you may as well go that little bit extra and get yourself a high-end video card to go with it.

## QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

**✗ Will TripleHead2Go slow my machine down?**

**✓** No. But if you choose to run your system at the maximum supported resolution of 3840x1024, you'll need a potent rig to support that level of detail.

**✗ What's this about Radeon incompatibilities?**

**✓** The TripleHead2Go doesn't like ATI hardware. It didn't like my workstation. It didn't like CrossFire. However, it was fine with NVIDIA SLI.

**✗ Don't I need some kind of special monitor?**

**✓** No. Just make sure you buy one capable of 1280x1024. You don't need LCD, and you don't need the same model, but if you do mix and match, make sure they're all height-adjustable.

**✗ Do I need to reconfigure my games?**

**✓** Sort of. The bundled Surround Gaming Utility does this for you. Some games (eg *Half-Life 2*) have native support for the triple-screen resolutions.

**✗ Can I use widescreen?**

**✓** Yes. Download the TripleHead2Go Mode Expander Tool from the Matrox site.





# DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



## Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning with a kebab and beer can stuck to your face? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at [wandy@dearwandy.com](mailto:wandy@dearwandy.com), including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.



The Gainward GeForce 7800 GS+ - you'll be wanting one of these then.

## AGP REVISITED

**Q** I'm sure you get utterly sick of questions like this, but after hours trawling forums I seem no closer to knowing. Can you tell me, what's the best AGP card money can buy?

John Clibbon

**A** Right now, this is the question I answer the most. I'm not surprised, nor am I sick of helping out, because most systems out there are still using AGP, and both ATI and NVIDIA have pretty much given up on them. According to Valve's survey - which, while not definitive, is a very good indicator - tells us that the most popular video card is a GeForce 6600. Behind that, it's the Radeon 9600. Then the GeForce FX 5200, GeForce 6800 and Radeon 9800. The first PCI-Express card to feature is used by just 5% of survey respondents.

To answer your question, the best AGP card money will buy is the Gainward BLISS GeForce 7800 GS+ Silent, actually a 7900 GT product with 24 pixel pipelines. It's the only card of its type available for the AGP interface, and is the fastest AGP card you can buy. But I'd not hang about waiting for the price to come down - supply and demand means it'll hover around £280 until stocks run out.

The next best alternative is a 7800 GS, and then a 6800 GS. You don't say what hardware you have right now, but it's likely that any of these badass AGP cards will make it feel like a new PC. They have plenty of grunt, enough to keep you going with all the modern titles, and will certainly keep you happy until the new crop of GPUs appear later in the year.

## BANSHEE MEETS HELIUM

**Q** I recently decided to upgrade my ageing PC. I should mention I'm the not-so-proud owner of a three-year-old Dell Dimension 4600 - hardly the ideal gaming rig! It's served me well over the years, but when I decided to upgrade the video card to a 256MB GeForce 6600, something shocking happened. In goes the card, in go the screws, in goes the power cable and boom! The CPU emits a wail akin to a banshee on helium. My tech-savvy mate was helping me out, and we stared at each



It's a good card, but an old card.

other bewildered. Neither of us knew what was going on, so we got onto Dell customer service asking what the noise meant. After several minutes talking to a rather clueless support staff member, we were met with a solid brick wall and were told that all 256MB cards are incompatible with my computer. Neither of us had ever before heard anything like this. The card slot is AGP, and the computer itself is not that old. What's going on here?

Dave Chandler

**A** I'm not quite sure what to say. It's not possible for your processor to make a sound, but it is possible for the voltage controller chips on your motherboard to resonate and cause what's known as PWM noise. But this isn't going to be a banshee on helium, more a hamster on speed.

Really, the only things I can think of that would make a noise such as the one you describe are fans or speakers. I would check the source of the noise, and if it's the speaker, chances are your motherboard is extremely unhappy about something. Are you sure you didn't knock over one of its capacitors, or perhaps scar the surface with a badly-aimed screwdriver? You need to whip out the card and make sure the system still boots with the onboard graphics. If it's a fan, such as the one over

your processor, on your video card or inside your power supply, it can be replaced very easily or quietened with a drop of non-flammable lubricant such as sewing machine oil (although personally, I'd just replace it).

As for your Dell being incompatible with all 256MB video cards, that's absolute rubbish. Even the most cursory Google reveals that people have upgraded their Dimension 4600s to use all manner of high-end Radeon and GeForce cards without problem. But I have to ask, was your new 6600 actually second-hand? If when reverting to the onboard chip you discover the system is dead, it could be that the GeForce was damaged in some way.

## X MARKS THE LOT

**Q** I have a Packard Bell with a 17-inch LCD, 3.4GHz P4, 2GB RAM and a Radeon 9550 which I'm going to replace with an X850 Pro for about £130. First, is this enough to boost my games, or must I change my processor too? I play HL2, F.E.A.R. and Oblivion. Second, I like to run at 1024x768. Will the new card enable me to run higher or is that more a restriction of the monitor? Finally, I believe the X850 Pro is quite loud - should I be getting a Zalman?

Jonathan Parker

**A** The X850 Pro is basically an old 12-pipeline version of its faster XT

## DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

### GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 6.7	28 JUL 06
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 91.31	23 JUN 06

### SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SOUND BLASTER X-Fi 2090001	3 JUL 05
Creative	AUDIGY AUDIGY2 4.2.08.0004	24 JAN 06



@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

## "In goes the card, in goes the screws and power cable, and boom! The CPU emits a wail akin to a banshee on helium"

It's not sounding good for reader Dave Chandler

sibling, and should deliver performance similar to that of the old GeForce 6800GT. If you're working to a tight budget, I'd go for the Radeon X800 GTO and save some cash. If you're really looking to just up the performance of your machine, the GeForce 7800 GS will blow your socks off.

As for resolution, I'd not get your hopes up about running titles such as Oblivion in high sizes. And yes, it's also possible that your screen won't display them anyway – you need to check to see if your LCD can handle 1280x1024, because it may not.

As for the X850 Pro being quite loud, I'd leave any decision on cooling until you've fitted the card and heard it with your own ears. Don't go spending money on quiet products you may not actually need.

### X-RATED

**Q** I want to buy a X1900 XTX for my Dell XPS, but am not sure if its 460W power supply is up to the job. Also, with news of the X1950 XTX, I'm starting to wonder if my Dell's gaming life is fading?

John Whitton

**A** As a single card, the XTX draws about 125W, so you're going to need between 460W and 500W supplying it. And if you're going to fret about your system becoming obsolete, stick to consoles!

### BATTLEFIELD WOE

**Q** I'm getting distraught playing Battlefield 2 because it takes forever to load. By the time I arrive on the scene, everyone's nicked all the choppers, tanks and helicopters. Any tips how I can speed things up? My PC is a P4 3.0GHz with a Radeon 9800 and 1GB RAM.


Chris Goodwin

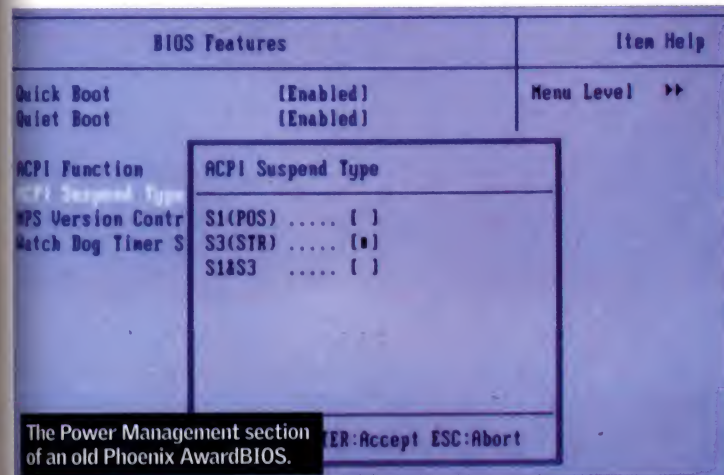
**A** Simple – double your RAM to 2GB.

### STAND BY YOU

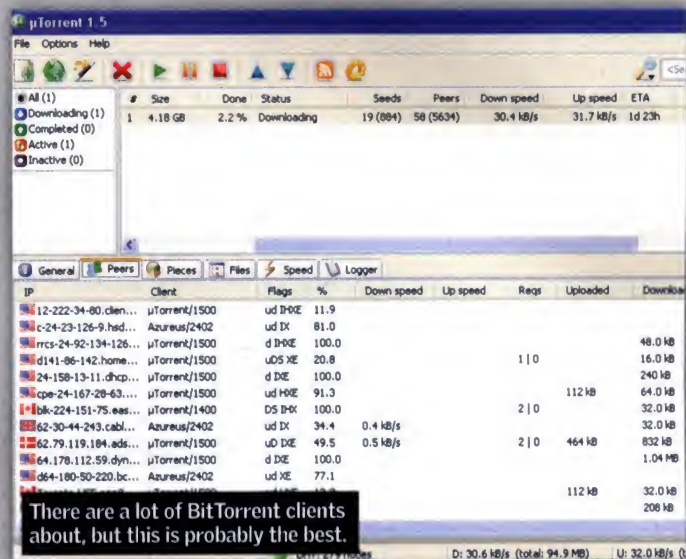
**Q** My PC started not being able to be revived from Standby, as in full-fans-off Standby – the only way out of it was to switch off. Now, if I shutdown through XP via the Start Menu I can't switch it back on using the power button – I have to power-off and back on at the plug and then it will start. Any ideas?

Greg Stinson

**A** Sounds like a BIOS option has been changed. Look in the ACPI or Power Management section for options such as S1 and S3. You've probably got it switched off – have you changed your CMOS battery? Loaded any BIOS defaults? No matter, since you're using XP you should be able to reactivate it without issue. 



## 50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



## 15 UTORRENT

### COSTS FREE

utorrent.com

The BitTorrent file-sharing protocol is most often associated with the illegal distribution of files, but that's an unfair accusation: after all, any protocol can be used for sending copyright material to your friends. And BitTorrent is now being used by a growing number of commercial organisations as a means for users to download files without sucking away all their bandwidth. It does this by making anyone participating in the torrent request data from each other, rather than from a central source. *World Of Warcraft* patches are distributed this way through the Blizzard Downloader.

To download a file over

BitTorrent, you'll need to find yourself a BitTorrent client.

One of the most popular

is Azureus, but until very recently it was known for being something of a resource hog. Certainly, my experience is that continued use of early versions of the product often brought Windows to its knees. And so I uninstalled it.

By comparison, Utorrent has almost no impact on the PC on which it's being run. It'll also run without fuss on almost any version of Windows. The developer's goal was to create a sturdy and compact BitTorrent client – the program itself is less than 200KB – with a minimal memory footprint, yet with all the key features of rivals.

With a UPnP-compatible router, you don't need to worry about forwarding ports to make BitTorrent work on your network. Plus, you don't really need to go fiddling with Utorrent's options – in almost all circumstances, it'll just work.

**FORUMS:**  
DIRECT FROM  
DEARWANDY.COM

**Q:** What do you do if you've forgotten your Windows password? Is there any way to boot up and not have to enter it? **A:** There's no way of bypassing the log-on screen. In future, you need to run the Windows Forgotten Password Wizard and save your data to a floppy. Open the User Accounts Control Panel, select the account you wish to protect, then click the Prevent a forgotten password link in the top left. In your case, you need to download the Offline NT Password & Registry Editor from [home.eunet.no/~pnordahl/ntpasswd](http://home.eunet.no/~pnordahl/ntpasswd). Good luck.







# COMPANY of HEROES

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## Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at [watchdog@pczone.co.uk](mailto:watchdog@pczone.co.uk) with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

# WATCHDOG

Not all companies are bad – but if they are, write to us for help...

## HUH? DON'T SEE IT

Appearances can be deceptive as James Halpin found out when he decided to use the pictures on Dabs.com to help him decide which motherboard to pick. Selecting one that had a retention module fitted, he put in his order. But to his surprise, when the motherboard dropped onto his doormat, there was no retention module to be found. After getting in contact with Dabs, he was informed that the pictures are only for illustrative purposes, but James reckons there was "nothing elsewhere to say that the motherboard didn't come with a retention module". With Dabs refusing to take the motherboard back, James is now at a loss over what to do with his now useless board.

*Off we went to Dabs' HQ to find out what they had to say on the matter. "We're sorry to hear that Mr Halpin is dissatisfied with the service he has received from Dabs.com. After investigating the issue with our*

## The account keys from their brand-new, sealed and security-tagged game had already been used by someone...

*customer services manager, it seems that Mr Halpin was expecting a specific feature (a retention module) on the Gigabyte Motherboard he purchased because it was shown in the picture on our website.*

*"While our website does clearly state that images are for illustrative purposes only and we do our utmost to ensure accuracy, we do appreciate that images can occasionally be misleading and as such, offer customers a ten-day window during which they may return goods for a full refund. In Mr Halpin's case, he first contacted us almost six weeks after his goods were received and as such, our operator acted in line with company policy. As a goodwill gesture however, and to bring*



*this issue to a speedy conclusion, we will make arrangements in this instance to refund the motherboard."*

## LOST YOUR KEYS

Bucking the MMO trend, reader Craig Brown and his wife decided to desert *World Of Warcraft* in favour of *EverQuest II*. Buying themselves brand-new copies of the title plus its latest expansion, they sat down and started preparing for their new life outside of Azeroth. However, to their surprise, they discovered that the account keys from their brand-new, sealed and security-tagged copies of the game had already been used by someone...

When Craig tried to take them back to the store, the manager informed him that they couldn't help out and that he'd best speak to the publisher. So Craig and his wife created some temporary accounts with the 'introduce a friend' trial keys and patiently sat back to await a reply from Sony Online Entertainment's customer services. However, when it arrived, it wasn't exactly what they were hoping for, as the 'stating the bleeding obvious' reply explained that the account keys were already in use. Despite Craig replying back, he's still not heard anything further from SOE.

*We've sent off a few emails to SOE in the past, but never heard a peep out of them so we weren't exactly pinning all of our hopes on getting a reply. So it was to our surprise that one week after firing off an email to our contacts, Craig got back in touch with*

*the following: "Myself and my partner can't thank you enough for forwarding the previous email to Sony Online. Someone rectified the problem within the day and has even given us one of the adventure packs and a pre-order reward. There is no way that this would have been sorted out without your help."*

## DELL HATH NO FURY

David Smith purchased a Dell computer in January but has had nothing but problems with it. The PC hasn't worked since he bought it and after endless calls and emails, the Dell team came to the conclusion that they should send him some format CDs to reset the computer. To add insult to injury, the discs then didn't turn up for four weeks, but after he'd received them and gone through the recommended solution, he still continued to have problems. Getting straight back on the phone to complain, he was now cheekily told that they couldn't help him anymore because his 30-day customer satisfaction period was now up...

*It took Dell a little while to get back to us but when they did, everything had been sorted out. "Our customer relations team have investigated the matter and have spoken with Mr Smith. We booked a service call with the customer, and have successfully formatted and reinstalled the operations system on Mr Smith's PC following a fault found with the memory, which has been replaced. We have apologised to Mr Smith for any inconvenience caused."*

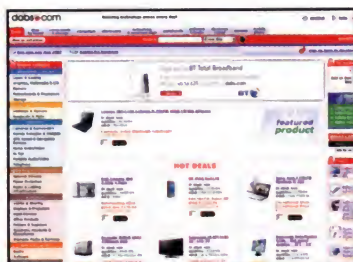
**THE ACCUSED**

dabs.com




**DELL**

**Guilty until proven innocent**







ONLY THOSE  
WHOSE FAITH IS TRUE  
WILL BE SAVED

# BROKEN SWORD

THE ANGEL OF DEATH



"an adventure gamer's adventure game" - PC Zone

12+

www.pegi.info



amBX



A GAME BY

  
CHARLES CECIL



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**REMEMBER:**  
YOU ALSO NEED  
MONEY FOR FOOD  
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

# HARDWARE DIVIDE

Want your games to run faster, with enhanced sound and vision? Time to get your wallet out

## LOADED?

### GRAPHICS

#### X1900 XTX

EXPECT TO PAY £371

MANUFACTURER CONNECT3D

WEBSITE [www.connect3d.com](http://www.connect3d.com)

Like its GeForce 7800 GTX predecessor, our current video card champ is a reference card. It's also the fastest single device available, putting most dual-card configurations in the shade. We've chosen the Connect3D variant as it's a no-nonsense package for sensible money, making it an ideal grounding for CrossFire rigs.



### PROCESSOR



#### CORE 2 EXTREME X6800

PAY £790

MAN Intel

WEB [intel.com](http://intel.com)

Faster than its predecessor and faster even than any Athlon FX, Intel's new 2930GHz Extreme processor features 1066MHz FSB, 4MB cache and LGA775 packaging. With a shorter pipeline, unique Smart Memory Access and Advanced Smart Cache technologies, its performance has people wondering what AMD can do to catch up.

### MOTHERBOARD



#### D975XB

EXPECT TO PAY

£150

MANUFACTURER

Intel

WEBSITE [intel.com](http://intel.com)

Gamers back away from motherboards bearing the Intel logo, but you should be reassured by the name, not put off by it. The D975XB is a genuine power-user product, with ATI CrossFire, eight USB holes, four SATA interfaces with RAID and eight-channel HD Audio. And it takes Core 2 Duo chips.

### HDD



#### RAPTOR 150GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£175

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE [www.wdc.com](http://www.wdc.com)

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. It's also now double the size, meaning you now need just one of them in your rig. But two in RAID-0 configuration will give you oodles of space and make *Battlefield 2* really fly.

### SCREEN



#### VP930

EXPECT TO PAY

£250

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE [viewsonic.co.uk](http://viewsonic.co.uk)

With our favourite LCD1970GX stuck at around £350, the VP930 makes more sense. It's a superb all-round performer at a fantastic price, and thanks to ViewSonic's elegant styling it looks just as commanding on your desk as the ousted NEC. It also pivots, tilts and offers 270-degrees of swivel.

### SOUND CARD



#### SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£140

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

### SPEAKERS



#### Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£195

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE [www.logitech.co.uk](http://www.logitech.co.uk)

The price has just dropped below £200 and these speakers are simply the best we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

## SKINT?

### GRAPHICS

#### X800 GTO

EXPECT TO PAY £110

MANUFACTURER GECUBE

WEBSITE [gecube.com.tw](http://gecube.com.tw)

You could save yourself a tenner and go for the 8-pipeline GT, but you'd be missing out. The GTO is without doubt the mainstream card to go for: an overclocking dream, it can trump the 6800 GT on maximum detail and this GECUBE comes with a heat-pipe and sensible bundle.



### PROCESSOR



#### ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

£55

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE [www.amd.co.uk](http://www.amd.co.uk)

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

### MOTHERBOARD



#### A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £59

MANUFACTURER

ASUSTek

WEBSITE [uk.asus.com](http://uk.asus.com)

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

### HDD



#### 1200JS SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£41

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com)

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

### SCREEN



#### VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£142

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE [www.viewsonic.co.uk](http://www.viewsonic.co.uk)

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

### SOUND CARD



#### SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£32

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

### SPEAKERS



#### INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£37

MANUFACTURER

Creative

WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

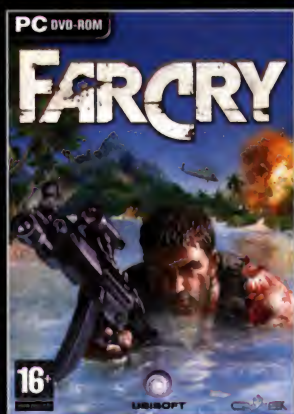


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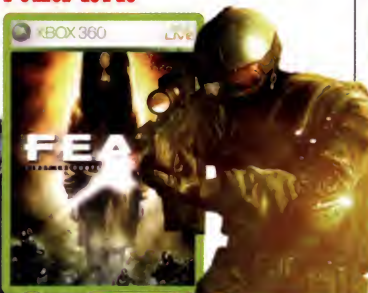


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**F.E.A.R.**



**TOP SPIN 2**



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PCZONE

## FREEPLAY



Skint? Play PC games for feck all...

## WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE GAMES!

## Clone Wars

**T** HERE'S SOMETHING MISSING from our newly introduced list of Top 5 Freeware Games (p117), and it's not the Touch 'n' Play Freeware jingle I requested which supposedly 'isn't in our budget'.

No, it's manic shoot 'em up *GridWars 2* from Mark Incitti. You see, as it's heavily inspired by *Geometry Wars*, Bizarre have seen fit to stamp on the freeware effort, wiping it out. Of course, *GridWars* has sprung up again in various places like a retro, vector-graphic hydra, but claims by Bizarre that the fan-made freeware title is affecting sales of *Geometry Wars* are, in my opinion, as credible as a highly unlikely bird (perhaps a stork) sitting on you.

We've also left out commercially-developed games which have become freeware, such as the original *Enemy Territory* and *F.E.A.R. Combat*, as well as shareware and abandonware. Take a look at the list and see what you think. Oh, and play them all too...

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, staff writer

## Try this!

Great Danes



Collect 60 gold bricks in *LEGO Star Wars II* (that's a lot of bricks) and you unlock a secret level which is not entirely unlike a certain city in Denmark which might possibly be actually made of LEGO. Yes, we're talking about LEGO City. It's got the fire station and everything.



A tablespoon of orc...

## 112 Demo Pages

Get your free games here!



A dash of ejecting brass...

## 114 Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



Kill some Nazis...

## 116 Win! Free! Games!

Get your hands on truckloads of budget games (54) in this month's compo!



Bake at 360-degrees...

## 118 Freeware

The crop-cream of free Internet gaming delivered straight to your doorstep



Whisk until fluffy...

## 120 Play!

Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



Allow to settle.

## 126 Fight Club

Take us out, online! Now with more trounce to the ounce!

PCZONE  
FREE-O-METER0  
HOURS

\*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month

322.4  
HOURS\*



# Demos

On the DVD - free games galore!



Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email [support@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:support@futurenet.co.uk), including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.

## DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC

But his friends call him Tim... [www.mightandmagic.com/uk/darkmessiah/teaser/](http://www.mightandmagic.com/uk/darkmessiah/teaser/)



**ARKANE** TOOK A bite out of a big biscuit with *Dark Messiah*. A visceral first-person biscuit that's better described as hands-in than hands-on. With an awareness of your legs that engine-mate Gordon Freeman doesn't have, you're well equipped for precarious acts like 'teetering'. And with a range of intuitive new moves and the ability to kick someone into a fire, Arkane seem to want

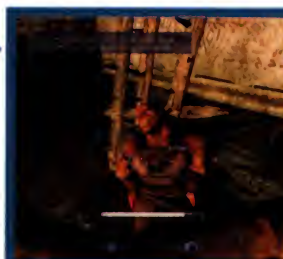
to desensitise up to as many forms of violence as possible. Good work, chaps.

In our demo, you can play through the training level and fanny about with some of the basic weapons. You get a sword, a couple of daggers, a bow and arrow and fireballs, and that's not counting the environmental opportunities for carnage. Watch out for prominent shelves, things tied up with rope, campfires and spikes – in fact, if a Health & Safety official visited most of the levels, he'd have them shut down. Assuming he didn't slip on an ice patch and fall off a cliff.

It's a relatively short demo, but *Dark Messiah* looks as sweet as a bee's arse, and if it doesn't leave you desperate to show that Cyclops who's boss, then perhaps you aren't the hero we thought you were. Perhaps you should stick to reading your books about dandelions.



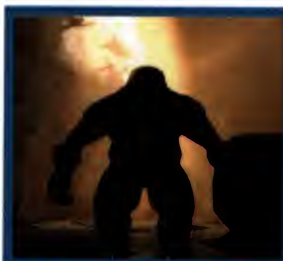
**HE HAD TO SPLIT**  
Power up your moves and catch an opponent off-guard, and you'll chop their head off. An early game decapitation was Palace Software's *Barbarian*. Arnie played Conan, and Conan was a Barbarian, too. Coincidence?



**UNFRIENDLY ACTS**  
Beds of spikes are another shortcut to a quick kill. Arnie was threatened by the spikes of the T-2000 in *Terminator 2*, while *Half-Life 2* introduced the Source engine that *DM* uses in the year 2000. (And four.) Coincidence?



**I KILLED YOU, YOU, YOU** We all need somebody to kill – and Arnie one-liners to kill them with



**IF IT BLEEDS...**  
Here's a Cyclops. Arnie never fought a Cyclops, but James Marsden played Cyclops in *The X-Men*, and owns a CD by The Strokes. Now consider the sitcom *Different Strokes*, with Gary Coleman as ARNOLD. This is no coincidence.



**WHAT A HOTHEAD**  
An excellent way to burn your enemy to death is to use fireballs – a word that's also the name of a character in *Running Man*. By pressing shift in-game, you sprint. Something that makes YOU a 'Running Man'. Coincidence?





## LEGO STAR WARS II

New kid on the block [www.legostarwars2.com](http://www.legostarwars2.com)

IN THIS **LEGO Star Wars II** demo you can sample blockbusting mischief in that hive of scum and villainy, Mos Eisley. A number of playable characters are on offer, including Luke Skywalker, Chewbacca and old Ben Kenobi, who can build bridges and suchlike, using his Force.

You'll even get to visit the Mos Eisley cantina, where you'll find the iconic *Star Wars* band, Han Solo shooting a carp-aimed Greedo and that crazy coot Kenobi slicing up the alien with the arse on his face. Don't forget to try out the two-player mode as well – and may the Force be... Oh, never mind.

### Ben the builder

Can he fix it? Let's hope so or we're buggered...



#### LET'S BUILD A PANZER

The Force becomes an even more powerful ally when everything's made of LEGO; upon discovering a pile of bricks Ben Kenobi does what every child would, and builds a stompy robot with guns, or an 'AT-ST', in *Star Wars* language.



#### 30-SECOND RAMPAGE

Go on a vehicular rampage for 100 yards, then you'll have to fight some Stormtroopers who keep nicking your ride. With all their technical wizardry you'd think they'd have central locking; that's Resistance engineering for you.



## CALL OF JUAREZ

Whip crack-away a-hooo [www.callofjuarez.com](http://www.callofjuarez.com)

**YOU CAN TELL** a man by the bits from *The Bible* he chooses to shout at you in the street. Some ignore the violence, pretending it's all about loving one another. Others will ignore the forgiving god, and threaten people walking into H&M with a million eternal tortures. And, well, everyone ignores the bits about eating shellfish near a menstruating Jezebel.

Reverend Ray is a fine creation, an uncomplicated Old Testament preacher who'd enjoy a night in with Fred Phelps and Jack Chick. Play this demo, and read passages from your in-game *Bible* while shooting people in the head. Let god sort the bastards out – it's excellent, morally unambiguous fun for all the family. Except the kids.



**1** I'm not a huge fan of Thou Shalt Not Kill, to be honest. That stuff about coveting your neighbour's ox is cool, though...

**2** Ray used to be a proper murderer before he turned to god, so he's handier with a pistol than the average vicar played by Derek Nimmo.

**3** Idealism bows to practicality here, as Ray puts his *Bible* away to shoot people with both guns. That's what we call thinking, Reverend.

### HERE'S BILLY

He's the other guy you play



#### Penny for 'em

Billy begins with a sexy misadventure that would make Robin Askwith blush. She's a prossy, you know. Not just in the game but on it.



#### Rabbit attack

The bow and arrow – ideal for shooting rabbits and proving you're a bit more zen about taking a life. Time to get over *Watership Down*.

## THE BEST OF THE REST



### HEROES OF ANNIHILATED EMPIRES

It's not an RPG/RTS hybrid – it's RPG vs RTS. This means you kill the orcs by building a factory on their feet. Probably. Best read the review (p86) and check it out yourself. [www.heroesofae.com](http://www.heroesofae.com)



### GTR2

10tacle aren't fooling anyone, here. Non-wisecracking cars? Without eyebrows? As good as this demo is, it seems to be based on the hilarious folly that cars are somehow married to the idea of driving. [www.10tacle.de/index.php?id=277&L=1](http://www.10tacle.de/index.php?id=277&L=1)



### HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

Hello! I'm Agent 47, and when I'm not finding over-complicated ways to kill my quarry, I kick back with some Pinot Grigio and chill my ears in a bucket of acid jazz. But mainly I dress up and kill people. [www.hitmanbloodmoney.com](http://www.hitmanbloodmoney.com)



### BLISS ISLAND

On Bliss Island you fend off waves of creatures by causing explosions that propel a boulder into them. It's like a visual representation of complete bliss. If you don't want to think of old pets as dead, why not think of Bliss Island as your own heaven, where all your pets are waiting for you? [www.funstardom.co.uk/bliss.php](http://www.funstardom.co.uk/bliss.php)

**PCZONE**  
**HOT**  
**DOWNLOADS**

### COMPANY OF HEROES

[www.companyofheroesgame.com](http://www.companyofheroesgame.com)



It may be brilliant and set a new standard in RTS gaming (see the review on page 78), but it wasn't smart enough to get onto this issue's DVD. Relic's WWII-themed RTS provides all the daily Nazi-killing that a growing man could possibly need.

### JUST CAUSE

[www.justcausegame.com](http://www.justcausegame.com)



A *GTA*-style game set in lush, *Far Cry*-like locations, in which you parachute onto cars and drag the driver out through the window. If that alone hasn't got you excited, then either your pulse has stopped or you can't absorb written information.



## SNIPPETS



### THE HARD CEL

mods.moddb.com/7612  
The movie was a bit confusing, but *A Scanner Darkly's* rotoscoped cel-shaded visual style was amazing. Now you can make *Doom 3* look just like that! Well, sort of. This cartoon shader mod for *Doom 3* might just look like somebody's turned the contrast up too high, but it's fun nonetheless.



### MODLIGHT

www.ea.com/official/battlefield/battlefield2/us  
EA and DICE have introduced their new MODLight service for *Battlefield 2*, in which they consider every mod released for the online shooter, host reviews and download links for the best ones, as well as hosting official servers for them online. EA hope this will strengthen their ties with the mod community.

# F.E.A.R. FOR FREE

**F.E.A.R. Combat delivers multiplayer for nada** [www.joinfear.com](http://www.joinfear.com)

**SOMEWHERE AROUND THE** middle of the list of great things people seem to ignore, right next to Texas BBQ pizza from Domino's, is *F.E.A.R.'s* multiplayer. All of the visceral blood-spurting greatness of the single-player side, along with the game's trademark slo-mo cinematics, ported to the realms of online shooting. It really wasn't as popular as it should have been.

It's possibly this reason which has compelled Sierra to release *F.E.A.R.*

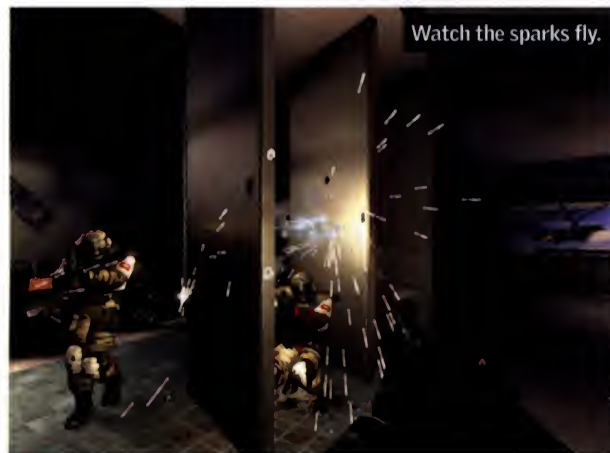
*Combat*, which is to all intents and purposes *F.E.A.R.'s* multiplayer component made available for download – with absolutely no charge. That's ten game modes, 19 maps, 12 weapons and the usual ability to download fan-made maps and content.

*F.E.A.R. Combat* is a startlingly generous offer, and one that shouldn't be passed up by anybody who doesn't already own a copy of *F.E.A.R.* – in fact, we can't think of a downside.

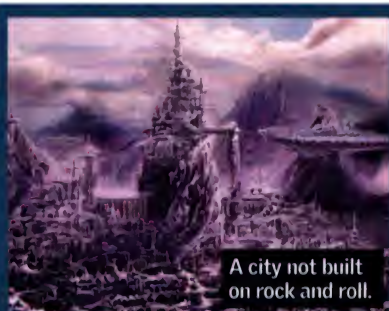
"You've been drinking again, haven't you Mr Robot?"



Watch the sparks fly.



Then watch even more sparks fly.



A city not built on rock and roll.

## OPPRESSION IMPRESSES

**The Iron Grip tightens**

[www.isotx.com/irongripnet](http://www.isotx.com/irongripnet) | Mod for: Half-Life 2

**A NEW TRAILER** released by the guys working on *Iron Grip: The Oppression* has us anticipating the genre-melding *HL2* total conversion more than ever. On one side there's the Rahmos team, playing from an RTS viewpoint under a single General. On the other side there's the Resistance, who play from a more traditional first-person view.

Whether you're producing and commanding infantry and vehicle units as the RTS team, or fighting

at street level as the FPS team, the entire world is cloaked with a brooding, dark and oppressive atmosphere. Snow-covered urban environments hide objectives which Resistance members must seek out and destroy, as well as the almost indestructible force of the excellently designed Rahmos tanks.

We've yet to see how it balances, but until then check out the movie and see just how impressive it's looking so far.

## THIN RED LINE

**Beyond The Red Line goes galactic**

[www.game-warden.com/bsg](http://www.game-warden.com/bsg)

**AFTER THE ORIGINAL** developers of *Freespace* went their separate ways, the source code for the space sim was freely distributed into the snatching claws of the rabid fanbase. One of the many fruits of this is *Battlestar Galactica: Beyond The Red Line*, a freeware total conversion developed on the *Freespace 2* engine.

They've recently released a multiplayer trailer too, giving an impression of what worldwide space combat has in store for us. Not only that, they've worked the engine so hard that it's sweating screenshots on a par with the best-looking space sim around, *X3*. Check out the website: the guys behind this total conversion have taken the engine beyond its limits.

And yes, it will have really big spaceships in it too. And yes, they will get angry and shoot at things. This is *Battlestar Galactica*, after all.

"Should've stayed in space school, kid."



"Last stop, a really big space station."





## SNIPPETS



### BIZARRE SOULS

[www.incitti.com/Blitz](http://www.incitti.com/Blitz)  
Bizarre Creations have stomped on *Geometry Wars* clone *GridWars 2*, wiping it from the Internet with accusations of copyright infringement. Apparently, Bizarre are feeling "the effects of the *Geometry Wars* clones on sales". We wouldn't encourage you to Google and download this top game at all.



### CS:S R&D TBC

[www.steampowered.com/Steam/Marketing/message/718](http://www.steampowered.com/Steam/Marketing/message/718)  
Upcoming *Counter-Strike: Source* updates are promising to push the core gameplay forward, according to Valve. Expect a revamped radar, an enemy tagging system, HDR lighting and map tweaks. The first map to be tuned will be de\_train.

## Bug-Fix of the Month

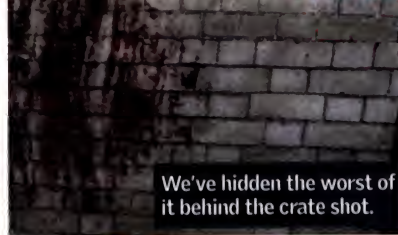
### THIS MONTH THE SIMS 2: FAMILY FUN STUFF



So now the 'bag of poo' will no longer break' after installation. What a relief.



Crate-stacking... Air vents... Truly terrifying.



We've hidden the worst of it behind the crate shot.



But can it play region 1 DVDs?

# ALONE IN THE DARK

We speak to Jens Nilsson of Frictional Games, developer of amazing freeware game *Penumbra* [frictionalgames.com](http://frictionalgames.com)

**PCZ:** How did Frictional Games come into being?

**JN:** "Frictional Games was formed during a university course when we worked on a project that ended up being *Penumbra*. The original core team had four people. We all live in Sweden and have recently finished our studies."

**PCZ:** Where did the idea for *Penumbra* come from?

**JN:** "We wanted to create a horror game and we wanted to do it differently to other action-based titles such as *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*. The only real design goal we had was that we didn't want to have any direct violence."

**PCZ:** Is that why you've focused on puzzles and tension?

**JN:** "Yes. We feel that with less violence there might be more horror from the atmosphere; the lack of an intruding interface combined with greater interaction could draw the player more into the game. With less action, the challenge would not be in the skill of dealing with the controls, allowing more people to experience the game itself."

**PCZ:** What works in particular have inspired you?

**JN:** "Although the game is a horror game, the horror aspect was not our primary focus during development – our main inspiration came from old-school adventure games. When it comes to horror, we've been inspired by movies such as *The Descent*, and books by HP Lovecraft and Clive Barker."

**PCZ:** How did the physics engine come about?

**JN:** "Originally the physics were just meant for simple things such as player movement. But after an idea to let the player use the mouse to open drawers, we started to experiment and tried to extend that way of 'mouse interaction' as much as we could. The physics also gives us new ways to create puzzles and that will hopefully make the adventure genre feel fresh again."

**PCZ:** How do you think *Penumbra* compares with big-budget commercial releases?

**JN:** "We think it compares quite well, both technically and through our art. For

a small team with only eight months to create a game from scratch, we think we did pretty well. The game obviously lacks in several areas, but give us another year and we'll show the world!"

**PCZ:** Do you think it's justified to put a reasonable price on all of your hard work?

**JN:** "We think it would be justified when *Penumbra* becomes a more complete product. It's not possible to work 8-12 hours, five days a week, and not aim for a pay cheque at the end. Our goal is not to be famous or to become millionaires, it's simply to be able to continue working full-time and earn an honest living while doing so."

**PCZ:** Have developers or publishers shown interest in your work?

**JN:** "Yes – we've had the nice opportunity to chat with both developers and publishers interested in *Penumbra*, and us as individuals. At the moment the priority for us is to continue on *Penumbra*, stay in control of the design and, hopefully, find a partner in the end."

## Movie of the Month TEAM FORTRESS 2

The re-emergence of *Team Fortress 2* has sent the *ZONE* office into a flurry of explosions and gunshots every lunchtime, as we revisit the original *Half-Life* team-blasters. For the sequel, Valve have adopted a radical new art style, which looks even better in motion than it does in these screenshots. We can't wait.



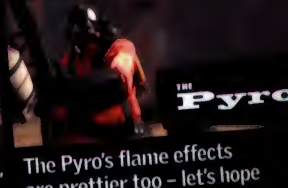
The Heavy shows off *TF2*'s new art style with exaggerated arms and an extremely large gun.



The Spy has a new look in the sequel, and has a fair few new tricks up his sleeve, too.



You can't see in this screenshot, but the animation work on the Demo Man is impressive.



The Pyro's flame effects are prettier too – let's hope he's more useful this time.





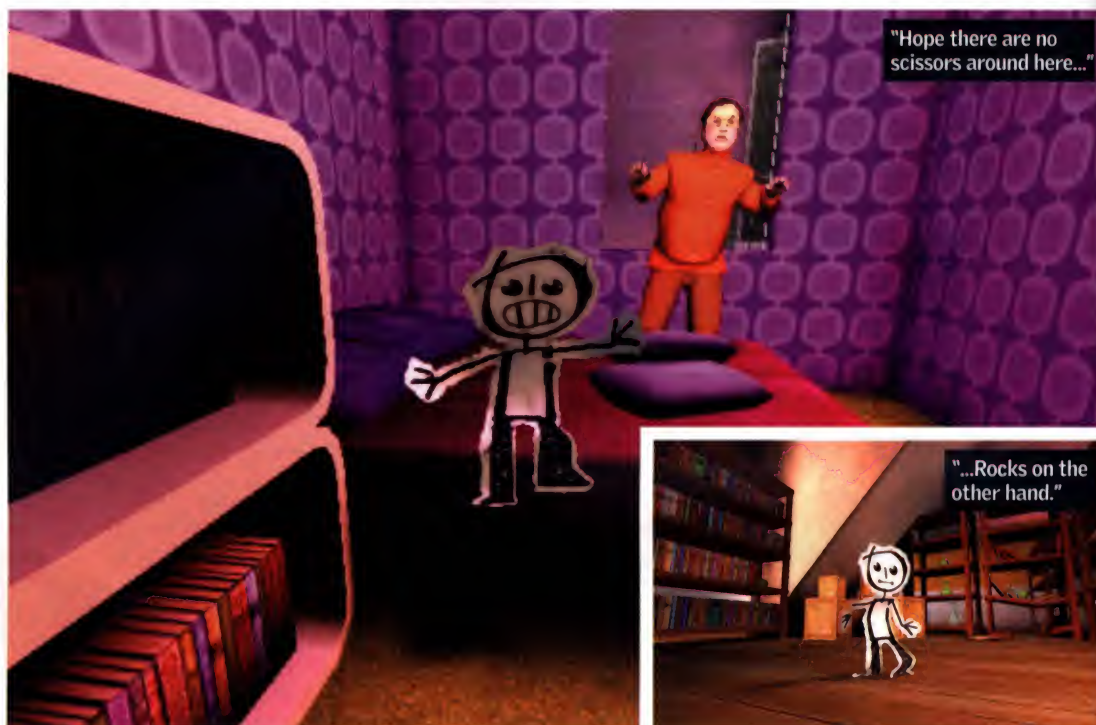
# BADLY DRAWN BOY

*Drawn To Be Alive* enters the fold [www.drawntobealive.com](http://www.drawntobealive.com) | Mod for: UT2004

**THIS CUTESY UT2004** mod is *Drawn To Be Alive*, a stealth/adventure game that puts you in control of a tiny paper man who's been extracted from his picture home by an art-swindling professor.

After investigating how he ended up in our cruel world in the first place, the mod tasks you with guiding the adorable paper-boy back to his own pictorial universe. Naturally, ours is a harsh place for an innocent doodle, and you must do your best to avoid human attention, along with the more obvious paper hazards of fire, water and wind. But your wafer-thin form also has its advantages in gameplay; you can hide behind furniture or inside drawings to avoid being discovered, and you can also slip underneath doors to access previously inaccessible areas.

*Drawn To Be Alive* is certainly looking like one of the more unique mods out there, and judging by the graphical attention the mod team are giving the cute scribble fellow, it's likely to be a triumph in the visual department too.



## WIN £404.46 WORTH OF GAMES!

That's a game a week for a year (and then two more), courtesy of Focus Multimedia!

**YEP, 54 GAMES** from Focus Multimedia's budget range could be yours, all yours. This prestigious collection of the year's best budget titles includes such gems as *King Kong*, *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, *Brothers In Arms: Road To Hill 30*, *Silent Hunter III*, *Beyond Good & Evil* and *Full Spectrum Warrior*. You don't even need that many games you big greedy, and we hope you've got an easy-going postman and no small pets who like to play or sleep on the doormat. To win, just answer the following question:

**WHICH OF THESE CHANCELLORS HANDLES THE UK GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET?**

- A. Chancellor Moneybags McScrooge
- B. Chancellor of the Exchequer
- C. Chancellor Palpatine



Don't forget to tell us your age and most anticipated PC game when entering by post! Send a postcard to Budget Compo, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. You can now enter via text message too – simply text PCZBUDGET, then a space, then either A, B or C followed by your name, address and age to 80889. Text entries will be charged at 50p plus your standard network tariff rate. By texting PC ZONE, you're agreeing to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing. If you do not wish to receive info relating to future offers and promotions, text the word NO at the end of your message. Competition ends October 11, 2006; entries received after this will be detained and interrogated. Standard rules apply – see p9. We're not accountable for any eye-strain caused by this tiny text.





# THAT'S NO MOON!

It's actually *2Moons* by David Perry [2moons.acclaim.com](http://2moons.acclaim.com)



**NO, IT'S NOT** a co-op game in which you drop your pants at passing cars. Acclaim – the ex-developer responsible for such disappointments as *Turok 2* and that BMX game with tits in it – are back from the dead, but only in name-form.

These days, the ex-publishing giant spends its time offering online games via its website, one of which is *2Moons*, a recently announced MMORPG being constructed under the discerning gaze of ex-Shiny boss, Dave Perry.

By far the most interesting aspect of the game, besides its pre-determined mature rating, is that it's also absolutely free – you pay no money. No purchase, no subscription, nada. Acclaim intends to fund the game mostly by means of in-game advertising, and while this isn't new in the MMO scene (see *PlanetSide*), *2Moons* bizarrely gives you the option to turn it all off. If this takes off, MMO gamers will be well and truly all over the moons.



M-rated: Dave Perry.

# FUTURE PERFECT

*Sapphire Scar* beams down for RPG shooting fun

[sapphirescar.marsmodule.com](http://sapphirescar.marsmodule.com) | Mod for: Doom 3

**CONSIDERING THE HUGE** popularity of FPS/RPG hybrids like *Deus Ex* and *System Shock*, it's a surprise the genre hasn't been properly explored in recent years. Thankfully, the mod scene isn't totally barren of statistical shooters, as *Doom 3* total conversion *Sapphire Scar* is already well into development.

In a style not too dissimilar from the above mentioned role-players, *Sapphire Scar* bolsters *Doom 3*'s vanilla shooting with RPG stats and a futuristic sci-fi universe. In the plot department, you play a corporation security officer posted on a far away moon, who eventually discovers a massive conspiracy involving dark experiments, secret undersea aliens and Sci-Fi Channel favourite, viral nanotechnology. Eventually this launches you into a battle to take down the big, evil corporation, and thus the shooting half of the gameplay begins.

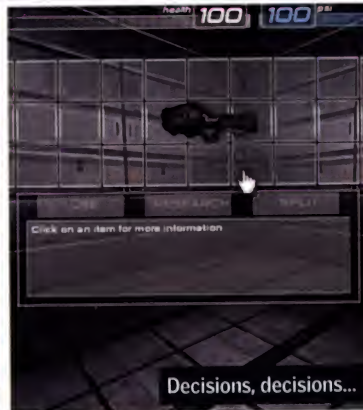
We don't know much else about the mod past these screenshots and story details, but the sight of a *Deus Ex*-style inventory menu and box-happy interface has us excited. Just look at the bounding box around that gun, it holds the hopes and dreams of a fading genre – and with that inventory grid, we rearrange the bazookas of our hearts to pick up the 9mm ammo of forgotten victories. Here's hoping that the mod team beat Irrational's *Bioshock* to the chase, lest *Sapphire Scar* be left in the blue.



Now that, my friend, is a bounding box.



Looks weird without the blood.



Decisions, decisions...

## PCZONE TOP 5 FREWARE GAMES



1

### GOLF?

[www.golfquestionmark.com](http://www.golfquestionmark.com)

A beautifully surreal and artistic rendition of the classic sport. Obscenely funny with two players and a fantastic game to boot.



2

### N

[www.harveycartel.org/metanet/n.html](http://www.harveycartel.org/metanet/n.html)

Old-school platforming mixed with new-school style. Not that new schools are stylish, but *N*'s inertia-harnessing physics are gloriously entertaining.



3

### RROOTAGE

[snipurl.com/rRootage](http://snipurl.com/rRootage)

Concentrate your fire on procedurally-generated bosses while avoiding massive amounts of bullets in what we reckon is Kenta Cho's best shooter.



4

### NARBACULAR DROP

[www.nuclearmonkeysoftware.com](http://www.nuclearmonkeysoftware.com)

Admittedly we only love this because we can't play Valve's *Portal* right away, but this mind-boggling dimensional puzzler is simply amazing to play.



5

### CAVE STORY

[agtp.romhack.net/doukutsu.html](http://agtp.romhack.net/doukutsu.html)

The freeware world is riddled with side-scrolling adventures, but this one reigns supreme thanks to its massive depth and cutesy storyline.





# Freeware



Unlike George Michael, *Steve Hogarty* wants his free(dom)

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month we mess with space-time, mess with the domino effect, mess with multiplayer knighthood and mess with robotic clawing arms. We're very messy.

## NARBACULAR DROP

Einstein would have loved this

Developer: Nuclear Monkey Software | [www.nuclearmonkeysoftware.com](http://www.nuclearmonkeysoftware.com)

**WITH VALVE'S ASTOUNDINGLY** complex *Portal* game exciting physicists all over the Internet and *Prey's* not-so-complex but still quite clever portals creating a buzz among post-modern artists, it's time to roll in *Narbacular Drop*, the spiritual predecessor to *Portal* by way of having the same development team.

At the core of both *Portal* and *Narbacular Drop* is the idea of person-sized, space-warping portals – two can exist at any one time, both of which are placed by you. As you enter one portal, you seamlessly exit another. Even as you look through one portal you see out of the other. If you've already read Will's hands-on with Valve's *Portal* (p55), then you'll know why Gabe Newell is so enamoured with the technology behind it.

*Narbacular Drop* is a puzzle game whose childish hand-drawn introduction belies a huge amount of depth. Almost everything you see happen in the *Portal* movie can be recreated here, from chasing yourself in circles to falling through an infinite loop. While initially

confusing, placing portals becomes second nature long before the novelty even begins to wear thin – in fact, as soon as you've finished the few puzzles supplied with the game, there are a handful of decent fan-made levels to be found online. These present far tougher challenges, often requiring you to fall into a portal on the floor to launch yourself from a portal on the wall at high speed, just one of the many ingenious methods of portal usage.

*Narbacular Drop* is the best way to take the edge off that festering anticipation of Valve's new puzzler, and one which will get you thinking with portals.

**FREEWARE  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH**



That's one angry wall.



This is Princess No-Knees. She can't jump.



It's a long way down, or something.



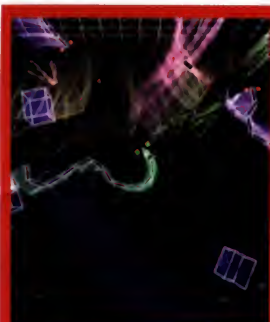
Goblins can't actually hurt you.



This way up.



It's coming out as it's going in. Madness!



## MU-CADE Get a mu've on

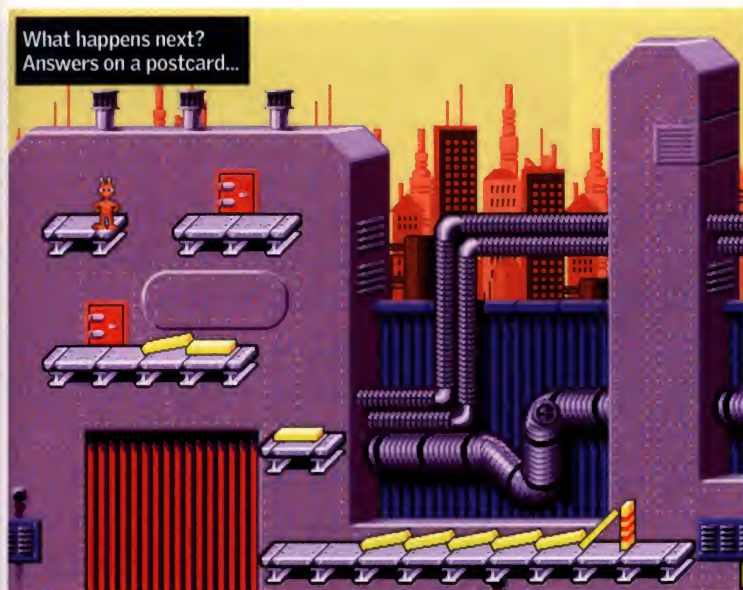
[snipurl.com/pcz\\_kentacho](http://snipurl.com/pcz_kentacho)

**THAT'S MU AS** in the 12th letter of the Greek alphabet, a symbol which we reckon isn't in that pile of carved potato stamps our printers use to create the magazine.

*Mu-cade* is a shmup from the god of freeware shmups, Kenta Cho. Taking place in a rectangular top-down arena in space, your ship must destroy enemy ships and avoid being knocked outside the fence. As you kill your tail grows, which both helps you by allowing you to cut it off for attack bonuses, but hinders you in that enemy bullets knock it about and drag you off-screen with their momentum.

As usual, a great soundtrack accompanies the action, and while this isn't Cho's best shmup, it's still a fantastic distraction.





## PUSHOVER

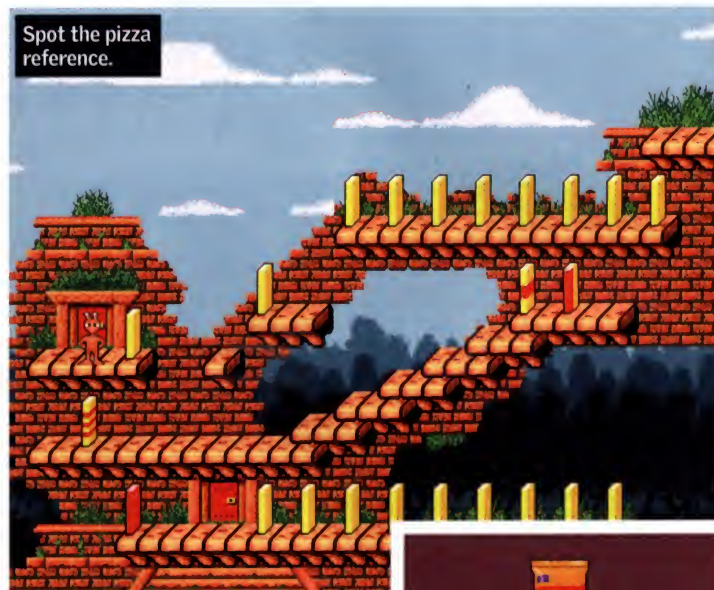
Far cooler than a pullover

Dev: IshiSoft  
snipurl.com/pcz\_pushover

**ORIGINALLY RELEASED ON** the Amiga in 1992 and accompanied by a heavy Quavers sponsorship, *Pushover* was a game in which you must rescue ex-Quavers mascot Colin Curly's packets of Quavers. You were GI Ant, the ant, and somehow the fact that some cartoon bulldog dropped a crate of highly processed potato snacks down your anthill raised the challenge of having to topple dominoes in a particular order to make a certain one fall last.

This freeware remake has removed the artery-clogging tasty snack

endorsements, leaving just the domino-toppling fun behind. GI Ant reprises his role as the toppler, and every level from the gentle introduction to the mind-numbingly complex later puzzles is reproduced perfectly. It's a simple concept, and one which precedes fancy physics engines seen in similar puzzle games like *Armadillo Run*. GI Ant can only push one domino, a puzzle mechanic explained by the fact that after pushing something once, an ant is too knackered to do anything else but run.



The best method of floaty light snack retrieval is, as ever, making the domino with three stripes across it fall down last and making sure it lies flat, as well as having every other domino fall too. Dominoes can be picked up and moved, and there are a handful of different domino types, distinguished by their semaphore-like markings. Some of them split in two, others fall upwards and some even explode – but there's only one way to do each puzzle. Retro genius strikes again.



## DARSANA

Medieval goes multiplayer, minus the multi

www.darsana-game.com

**FREE STANDALONE** first-person multiplayer shooters, as well as shrouding themselves with multi-layered adjectives, are an inherently lonely experience. It's quite understandable why. Statistically, you're just not going to find crowds of people clambering to play them.

Playing *Darsana* is a matter of going hands-on with the community and finding out when people actually play online – which is something I only vainly attempted. *Darsana*, according to the time when there were actually three of us on a server, is a solid medieval multiplayer game. Using a variety of weapons and magic, knights and undead types must valiantly attempt to kill one another on maps which take place in suitably medieval settings – if you're thinking castles and dungeons and more castles, you'd be right.

Movement feels a tad jerky depending on the temperament of the server, which is an obvious disadvantage when you're trying to impale a zombie on your sword.

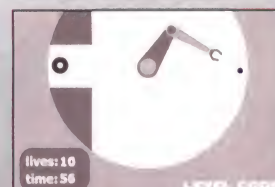
It's frustrating to see a piece of freeware being ignored along with most other online freeware games, especially one developed with such obvious passion.

Why can't we all just drink ale instead?



## WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

ROBOCLAW



Developer: Scenta  
snipurl.com/uedi

If you've worked in a nuclear power plant, or are a machine on one of those car assembly lines, you'll be great at this game. Use a robotic claw to grab the blue ball, which is most likely some sort of highly radioactive material commonly handled by roboclaws, and place it in the circle. The simple, circular movements are anything but intuitive. As you progress the challenge becomes consecutively harder, adding walls to avoid, moving walls to avoid, moving walls and non-moving walls to avoid, moving balls and then eventually making the roboclaw spiral around.

It's definitely one of those webgames you scoff at, only to find yourself still playing 15 minutes later. The simplicity of the controls and the spirographical undulations of the circular claw movement make it a mini-joy to play.





Play: **MOD**

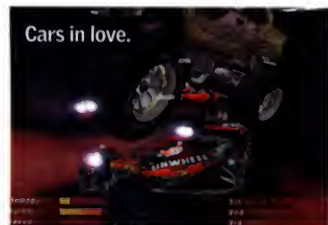


# UNWHEEL R5



**Jon Blyth lays down his arms and drives a monster truck into a pool ball**

[unwheel.beyondunreal.com](http://unwheel.beyondunreal.com) | Mod for: UT2004



**DON'T GET ME** wrong, I love killing zombies and Nazis. There's nothing I like more than to focus my energies on the undead or those fun-time 1940s guys – in games. With real-life neo-fascists though, my deadly response is to get off the bus in disgust. It's true, I like killing pretty much anything, as long as there's a sense of emotional detachment, no liquid blood and the limit of my physical investment is to press a tiny button. Oh, and I don't like it when what I'm killing looks at me and asks "Why?" either.

With all this love for the carnage, a *UT* total conversion that rips out the guns and the humans and replaces everything with arcade racing is an intriguing curiosity.

But that's *UnWheel R5*. If it wasn't so accomplished and they hadn't put so much love into it, you'd suspect they only made it to follow through with the pun.

But there definitely is love here. There's over ten (OK, eleven) different match styles – ranging from traditional flag-capturing multiplayer, to nudging an enormous ball into a goal. Then there's the hit-and-run 'Rabbit' game, and stunt matches replete with loops, ramps and walls of death.

You can't help but admire the number and range of maps, either. Rallies that pass through large Egyptian tombs sit comfortably next to whimsical *Micro Machines*-style fun on billiards and kitchen tables.

As for the driving, it's strictly fun. Gravity doesn't seem so fussed about bringing things down in *UnWheel*, so you can drive up walls a bit and make some satisfying jumps. Some efforts go well beyond the call of duty; for example, the drop-in perspective when you boost isn't a new visual effect, but the fact they've bothered to put it into their mod lets you know that Kenneth 'Shrimp' Watson and his team aren't just turning a scientist green and calling it a zombie mod.

I'll say something bad, for the sake of balance – the bots are irritating, less inclined to compete sensibly than drive constantly into your ruddy door. But then, it is called practice mode. When all's said and done, this is proper modding, baby.



# USKAARJ



**Andy Robinson is confused about his genre** [uskaarj.beyondunreal.com](http://uskaarj.beyondunreal.com) | Mod for: UT2004

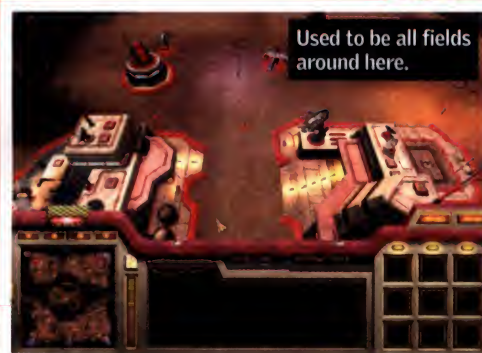
**TO PUT IT** simply, this *UT2004* mod (which is named after the game's alien baddies, in case you wondered) turns the king of multiplayer shooters into a full-on *Unreal* RTS. While this kind of genre re-jigging would be a challenge for most FPS games, *UT2004* lends itself well to the RTS formula, as land and air vehicles are plentiful. There's a wide selection of rugged mercs to order around too, and the range of voice taunts in the game are perfect for bantering RTS soldiers.

On the surface, it works – and works well. *UT2004*'s rolling terrain is perfect for big strategic game maps and the team behind *Uskaarj* have done an excellent job with all the fiddly bits, such as adding a *Command & Conquer*-style side-bar and transforming the interface fully to the RTS way of thinking.

A quick multiplayer session reveals that there's still a lot of work to be done. As you'd probably expect from a beta, bugs are

rife in the latest version, including one niggling issue which had me stuck staring at a large, flying cod. Also, most of the interface buttons don't work, and we'd kill for some info on what we're actually building.

Still, there's a pretty impressive foundation here, and with a little work *Uskaarj* could turn out to be a trans-genre feat to behold.



# AFRAID OF MONSTERS



**"No I'm not," insists Steve Hogarty** [snipurl.com/pcz\\_monsters](http://snipurl.com/pcz_monsters) | Mod for: Half-Life

**HOW LONG HAS** it been since we've had an original *Half-Life* mod on these pages? No, how long has it been since we've had an *original original Half-Life* mod on these pages? I'm going to guess 'a really long time'.

Beginning inside a claustrophobic hospital and harshly reminding you how old the *Half-Life* engine looks now, *Afraid Of Monsters* follows the demented tale of a young drug-user whose addiction sends him spiralling into insanity. The mod portrays

the weirdness using some extremely clever level design. A totally dark room for example, with white line-etchings of trees and paths and eyes in the sky. Then there are the worrying noises and flashes of evil things in the darkness.

It's not pant-shittingly horrifying by a long shot, but it is unnerving and reminiscent of a great nightmare you may have had once. Polygons usually have to be in bigger bunches to scare us, but *Afraid Of Monsters* does a great job with what it's got.



## PCZONE TOP 5 SINGLE PLAYER HALF-LIFE 2 MODS



**1 GARRY'S MOD**  
Yes, we still think it's the best single-player thing ever. Get over it.

**2 MINERVA**  
This story-based puzzley wonder is made for lonely hearts.

**3 ECLIPSE**  
A fantasy physics-based third-person adventure, just for you.

**4 COMBINE DESTINY**  
Spend the night alone inside a Combine helmet. You'll have worse offers in your life.

**5 SHANTYTOWN**  
Use your cursor to direct Alyx as you sit in your bedroom alone.



# JUNK WAR



Play: **MOD**



**Andy Robinson plays a rubbish mod** [runestorm.za.net](http://runestorm.za.net) | Mod for: UT2004

**ROCKET LAUNCHERS AND** laser guns are all well and good, but there's nothing quite as satisfying as twatting someone in the face with a bit of steel piping. Sharing our lust for mindless violence, mod team Runestorm have gone and created *Junk War*, a UT2004 mutator that takes all of the game's high-tech weaponry and replaces it with an assortment of nasty objects that you can batter people with.

Some of our favourites include the devastating concrete pole, which (as you can imagine) pummels combatants to the ground; the unbeatable fluorescent tube which shatters on impact; beer bottles which can be craftily flung at foes; and the taser, which sends your enemy flying through the air, flailing like a sparkly mentalist.

The guys behind the mod have done an excellent job pumping out weapon models; the variety of the junk available

is huge and each weapon feels like more than just a lazy re-skin. Melee controls have also been re-tinkered in the mutator, so now you have both a standard and lethal charge swing, while more specialised junk like wine glasses can be flung and tasers jabbed.

*Junk War* is obviously the result of a lot of care and attention, and the sheer entertainment of a concrete pole stand-off means you should install it. Right now.



Classic: **MOD**



## BATTLEFIELD: GALACTIC CONQUEST

### Battlefront beater

**A MOD THAT** lived fast, died young and worried entire roomfuls of LucasArts lawyers, *Battlefield: Galactic Conquest* was a mod that packed AT-ATs full of stormtroopers into *Battlefield 1942*'s trenches with nary a care in the world. Despite treading on the toes of their own *Star Wars: Battlefront* title (which many considered inferior to the fan-made *Battlefield* mod), LucasArts allowed it to live in peace, albeit under the watchful eyes of civil lawyers.

*Galactic Conquest* seems to have disappeared off the radar now though, servers are non-existent and the developer's website hasn't been updated in over a year. While it lasted it was arguably the best mod of the *BF1942* engine ever. A sequel would possibly be the best thing to happen to mods since then.



# OBSIDIAN CONFLICT



**Andy Robinson's gone fishin'** [www.obsidianconflict.com](http://www.obsidianconflict.com) | Mod for: Half-Life 2

**IF, LIKE US,** you're wondering what the hell's taking the *Sven Co-op 2* team so long, then *Obsidian Conflict*, a *Half-Life 2* co-operative effort could well tickle your fancy.

Just like the acclaimed Swedish-named *Half-Life* mod, *Obsidian Conflict* offers a series of co-operative maps upon which you and a team of Internet buddies can fight the CPU hordes. *Obsidian's* locals aren't short of creativity either; anything from shopping mall stand-offs to giant-crane building games are available, and fresh weaponry, like the un-seen *HL2* sniper rifle and the classic Tau Cannon, is plentiful.

What really seals the deal for us though, is the fantastically fun and inventive fishing map, which has you using the gravity gun to hook bait to your rod and cast out for a chance of big haul. Any kind of weapon and critter can be caught from the waters, and with the rarity of firearms considered, a particular nasty catch can cause outright chaos among your fishing friends.

But even if virtual fishing isn't your thing, we reckon the list of unique maps and addictive co-op gameplay will have you hooked. Sorry.

Play: **MOD**





**FREEPLAYPLAY!**

Play: **MOD**



# SURREAL II



Screw physics, this is far more fun.



Steve Hogarty takes a crash course in surrealism [surreal-planet.com](http://surreal-planet.com) | Mod for: Battlefield 2

**THERE'S NOTHING INTRINSICALLY** funny about *Battlefield 2*. Sure, it's possible to feign helpfulness and lure an entire squad into the belly of a helicopter before flying out to sea and refusing to go back, but that's merely a hilarious act of subversion. While the game would like you to believe it's all about po-faced death-dealing, on the other hand it's coercing you into a world of misdirected artillery and suicidal buggies – like some sort of schizophrenic war general.

*Surreal II* plays to the latter leanings of the massively popular multiplayer shooter, imbuing the game with a sense of weirdness found only on planets situated on the exact opposite side of the sun to Earth, which is where the mod is set. Or at least that's what the mod's name would have you believe. The content is often quite level-headed to be honest, but it's all been developed with obvious attention to surrealist detail.

One of the added maps in particular takes Hazzard County and its resident Dukes, and transmogrifies it into the familiar *Battlefield* map style. The Duke's hideout

hosts the General Lee, the town centre becomes a control point, bridges (sometimes of the 'oh no, the bridge is out' variety) can be jumped and Daisy's tractor can be driven.

Speaking of which, the General Lee and other cars handle far better than the vanilla *Battlefield 2* vehicles. *Surreal II* adds the ability to perform handbrake turns and powerslides, meaning driving is a far more exciting experience. Otherwise, vehicles are definitely of the surreal persuasion. How about a VW Camper Van armed to the teeth with machine guns and armoured plating for example? Or the A-Team van with a big cannon on top which you can sit in the back of and hear Mr T talk some jibber-jabber? What about an eight-wheeled scorpion-car which shoots missiles from its tail and instead of pincers, it's got pincer-guns which shoot bullets and kill things?

Yes, this is definitely surreal. It's great to see a thriving community behind it too, and several stable servers running the mod online. You'll even find people playing it if you look hard enough, meaning this mod isn't just a LAN-anchored wonder. Now that's surreal.

Yes, Mr T actually talks in the game!



Car handling's been greatly improved.



Scorpy goes for a drive.







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# Fight Club



## The eighth rule of Fight Club is... Blue team needs medic

**COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!**

**AFTER LAST MONTH'S** experimental debacle, we played Fight Club by the book. And we learned a valuable lesson – letting people know in advance when we'll be starting Fight Club is a pretty important part of letting them join in. So we printed the dates and times in the mag, and lo! A server full of people just waiting to whup us up proper like.

Well, perhaps it was our doing. Perhaps it had more to do with the fact that people are just playing *Team Fortress Classic* in thrilled anticipation of the

release of *TF2*. We're not ones to blow our own trumpets here.

As if we weren't excited enough to see you, the party atmosphere was doubled by the happy coincidence that *Team Fortress* was celebrating its birthday. Our keen but inept capering was narrated by in-game party tooters, and the Demoman's bombs were transformed into little gift-wrapped presents.

Ah, the classics were played. The 2fort map offered its relentless flag-capturing and diving into secret entrances; dustbowl

witnessed scouts trying to retrieve their flag from a pile of 50 bombs and push it forwards another valuable pixel before the HWGuy chaingunned their speedy cheeks into the air. More excitable chaos has na'ry been seen, and we've never wanted to play *TF2* more.

Scouts – don't put those crowbars down yet. Next month's joy-packed sizzle bonanza will be *Half-Life 2: Deathmatch*. And it'll be on Thursday, September 21. And it'll be at 6pm. And it'll be brilliant. And Log will win at it.

Pyro – most definitely in *TFC*.

"And they said strafing lessons were a waste of money – look at me now!"

Explosives? How did you know?!

SuperNovi: wandys to good



## AND THE WINNER IS...

### The mechanical grabber rides again

**IT'S TRADITIONAL HERE** to do a Best Tag competition, but that's a non-starter for *TFC*, as the semi-convoluted method of customising the tags that you see on your computer doesn't mean everyone else sees the same thing. The Best Tag competition will be back with *HL2:DM* next month. So it's a double-helping of Best Screenshot this month.

First up, we have a shot from the dustbowl map sent by BriandePalma, with someone catching a surprisingly well-defined glimpse of a Scout running past them. If it was the Scout we're thinking of, he'll have turned around to see us going frantic with a crowbar all over his face. Nice work.

It's not the best screenshot in the world, but the second one (sent in anonymously) is just a nice reminder how far explosions have come along. You don't see anything exploding like that anymore, that's for sure.

### WINNER!



### RUNNER-UP!



## ZONE CHAT



Hey, you. You with the fingers.  
Do you wanna chat, or what?

**IT'S A VERY** short path from the thrill of finding something unknown, to expecting everyone else in the world to know about it. For instance, who doesn't remember the first time they saw the derriere of Kirk 'Goatse' Johnson? The wince, the search for traces of Photoshop. A search that could be mistaken by an observer for genuine sexual interest. A mere week later, you'll be saying, "What, haven't you heard of Goatse? He's like totally famous."

And so it was with Will and the O RLY owls – he'd just never seen human emotion expressed in Internet semi-language embossed over an owl. This led to a staggering Wonderland tour of the Internet, with Will gurgling at anthropomorphised nocturnal predators and their phonetic captions.

We also enjoyed some hot bassoon recommendations and a *Snakes On A Plane* chinwag, which just goes to prove that we're all well-rounded human beings. Some of us have even been abroad. We came back though, as you just can't get decent kebabs. Next *ZONE Chat* is on Wednesday, Sept 20 at 5:30pm. I daresay we'll manage if you don't turn up, but we'd rather not have to.

TAHTS NOT FUNNI



### How to join in!



If you fancy joining the *ZONE Chat*, then you'll need an IRC program and a Net connection. We recommend mIRC and you can find it on side two of our DVD. Just install the program, set the options, devise an online identity that'll make you stand out from the crowd, connect to a Quakenet server nearest to you, type /join #pcz into the command line, and hey presto, you're there! Chatting with the friendliest bunch of online readers you could hope to find. Remember, play nice and don't be rude.

### Can't make Fight Club?

If you can't make it to Fight Club – perhaps you've fallen off a horse and broken your finger and are in an impossibly long queue at an NHS hospital – then join other *PCZ* readers on the following public servers. *ZONE* staff might even be there. The latest info can always be found at [www.zonegames.co.uk](http://www.zonegames.co.uk).

### WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton *PCZ\_NorthernScum*  
Will Porter *PCZ\_Batsphinx*  
Suzy Wallace *PCZ\_Uzibat*  
Steve Hogarty *PCZ\_escaped\_monkey*  
Andy Robinson *PCZ\_EssexHoodlum*  
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**10 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING**  
Listed on NovaWorld



## Need:

A copy of *Day Of Defeat: Source*  
An Internet connection  
Dad's Army quotes

## What you'll get:

- ✓ Better than most of the PC ZONE team
- ✓ A numb arse from camping on the church roof
- ✓ Something to read on the toilet
- ✗ A day of defeat

# Bash the bosch in... Day Of Defeat: Source

Nazis? *Andy Robinson* hates those guys

**I**N THE WORLD of first-person shooters, there aren't many armies out there that couldn't wipe the floor with the PC ZONE foot soldiers. In fact, in our last war-themed Fight Club, most of us spent more time crashing helicopters into oil rigs than actually fighting the enemy, so we think it's high time that we went back to boot camp for some much needed re-education. Our shooter of choice this month is *Day Of Defeat: Source*. Pay attention team – there'll be a multiple-choice test at the end of the day...



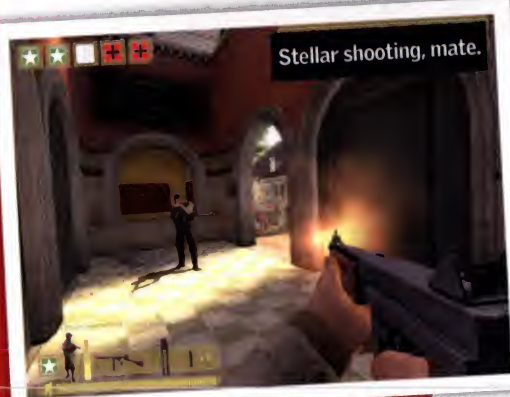
## 01 EVERYBODY GET DOWN!

Unlike other vanilla *Half-Life* mods, in *Day Of Defeat* you have the ability to lay down in a prone position. As you can imagine, this drastically increases your accuracy – especially if you're hauling a machine gun around – and also makes you considerably harder to pick off. However, with the prone position's constricted mobility considered, we advise picking your camping spots carefully before flopping to the floor.



## 02 Leg it

The sprint button can be handy in plenty of situations, not least when you're trying to shovel someone who's busy shooting at your Jimmy Carr spray tag. Sprinting between cover is best timed in conjunction with a crafty grenade; smoke is obviously the preferred flavour, but the standard, exploding kind of grenade can also dazzle machine gunners long enough for you to dash behind the nearest column or wheelie-bin.



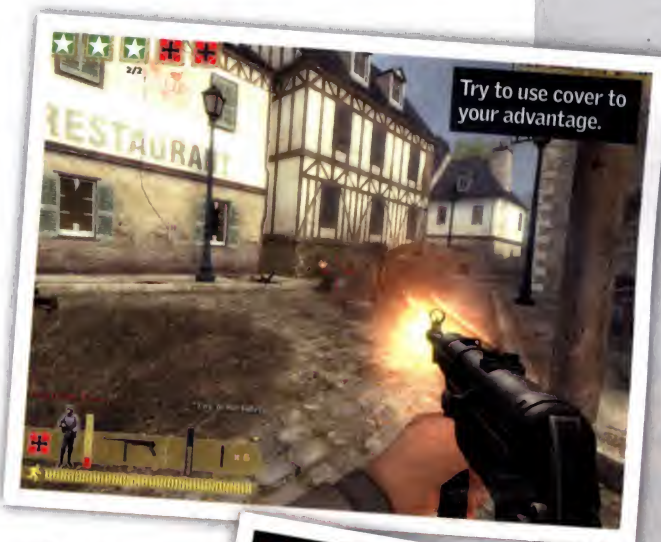
## 03 GET MAPPING

As we like to repeat in every How To guide, one of the most important parts of mastering the online FPS is scouting out the maps and arenas you'll be fighting in. After all, it's no good becoming a trained killer if you don't know where your enemy's going to come from. Practice makes perfect; when you're playing online, try to remember the main traffic areas and sneaky camping spots your enemy has used and then use them for yourself.



## 04 Straight shooting

The recoil system in *DOD:S* tends to drive your weapon upward as it's fired, especially with powerful weapons like the M1 Garand or K98K. In close quarters, the easiest approach to managing weapon recoil is to aim at your target's feet and let the gun gracefully slide up for a cheeky headshot. But you won't always get away with this lazy man's approach to aiming, so start learning how to burst fire as soon as possible.



## 05 SNIPE SNIPE BABY

Once you've mustered a working knowledge of the game's maps, you should know a few camping spots to scrape your way through the sniper profession. Try to keep back from windows and openings as far as possible, and keep your movement to a minimum – even if it means using the non-scoped view. Be on the lookout for enemy snipers, especially in areas you would set up camp. In the battle of snipers, whoever sees first usually wins.



## 06 Single file, please

Sticking to groups is generally a good idea; not only will you stand a better chance in a firefight with a team-mate in tow, but you'll also have someone to get shot and reveal the enemy's position. However, as any budding sniper will tell you, groups are a far juicier target than just a single player – spread yourself out to avoid embarrassing grenade kills and spot enemies easier when they attack.

## 07 READY TO THROW

Not many people realise you can let grenades 'cook' before lobbing them. Standard grenades have five seconds before they explode, so if you hold on to them for a bit before throwing, you can give your target virtually no chance. Also commonly ignored is the 'pick up grenade' key. Bind it somewhere – killing someone with their own grenade is the highest state of über-ness known to man.

## 08 KILLING MACHINE

The machine gunner is a similar breed to the sniper; you're going to need to know your maps. You should learn the most effective deploy locations, but the best position for machine gunners is usually prone at the end of a long street, preferably on top of some suitable camouflage. When deployed, keep an eye on your ammo – reload time is long enough for the enemy to bludgeon you with a lolly stick. **PCZ**





# BBC MODEL B

## EMULATION OF THE MONTH

**BeebEm is a competent and user-friendly nostalgia generator**



*Exile.* The best game ever.

[illegible]

**Will's anti-Steve tirade continues.**

A screenshot of the game Mr Do's BBC makeover. The screen shows a top-down view of a character, Mr Do, standing on a green field. The field is divided into two main areas by a vertical black line. On the left, there are several clusters of red flowers. On the right, there are more red flowers and a small white car. The top of the screen displays a status bar with various icons and numbers, including a score of 1000 and a time of 1:00. The text "Mr Do's BBC makeover." is overlaid on the bottom right of the screen.

Mr Do's BE  
makeover.

Interweb are more than a little bespectacled and not often updated, but if you're willing to embark on a slightly complicated journey into BASIC-nostalgia, the gang's all here. The story of Acorn and of the BBC is a very British, very modest and very doomed love affair with technology – so download this stuff with extreme reverence and piety.

Get up Delta!

```
BBC Computer

Acorn DFS
BASIC

>S
stryker          (00)
Drive 0
Dir 0$

Option 0 (off)
Lib 0$

GAME
selcf
MSCREEN
STRYKER

>LOAD "STRYKER"
>_
```

Not Jeff the porn star, we think.



# NOW & THEN

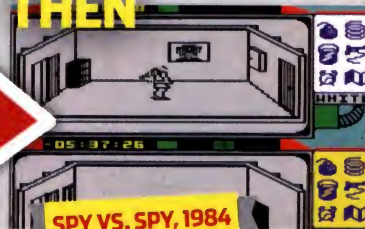
## Spy vs. Spy vs Team Fortress 2

### NOW



TEAM FORTRESS 2, 2006

### THEN



SPY VS. SPY, 1984

**SPYING THINKS IT'S** all that, doesn't it? Sam Fisher never stops to tell a knock-knock joke, and I've yet to see James Bond go boss-eyed after walking his nuts into a bollard. People simply don't remember what spying is really about – balancing buckets of water on a door and running away with the briefcase.

Sir Francis Walsingham, royal Spymaster to Queen Elizabeth, was asked on his retirement about his biggest regret. He admitted that once, he got careless with the briefcase and touched an electrified doorknob: "My skeleton was visible for a couple of seconds," he shuddered.

Team Fortress 2's spy class will bring back a bit of the fun, letting you listen in to enemy conversations and dress up in their clothes. But 22 years ago, First Star Software got it right first time with *Spy vs. Spy*. Based on the cartoon in *Mad* magazine, *Spy vs. Spy* captured perfectly the running around, the hiding bombs in a cupboard, and most importantly the 'being a colour-coded crow' that plays a fundamental part of modern espionage.

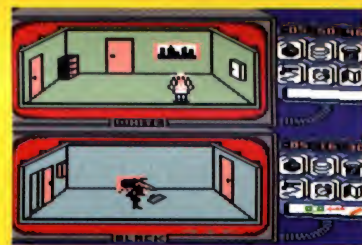


## PLAY IT!

PCZONE  
ON THE DVD

*Spy vs. Spy* wasn't available for the PC until the second sequel, *Arctic Capers*. It was on everything else, though – C64, ST, NES, Amiga, even Mr Sugar's Amstrad. So it's not too difficult to find out there...

- 1 Download an emulator. You could try CSS64 for the C64, STeEm for the ST or NESTopia for the NES.
- 2 Then you'll need to find a copy of the game. This is where the whole thing gets legally dodgy, and we start being vague. You know Google, right?
- 3 Did you know, the money you spend on pirate DVDs goes to actual pirates with massive beards?
- 4 Remember to invite a friend around – it's much better when you can punch the winner.



# MAME FRAME

## Konami celebrates itself with comedy shooters – of a sexy inclination...

**IT'S BEEN A** while since Takosuke the octopus saved the world in *Parodius*, and he's put some of his feet up. He now spends his days dreaming about the ladies, the lovely ladies, while his penguin sidekick Pentarou hammers away at a typewriter.

Actor-turned-director, Takosuke has gone behind the scenes, doling out missions to the heroes on his books. This is *Sexy Parodius*, the fifth game in the *Parodius* series – Konami's comedy homage to their classic series *Gradius* (among others). It's one of the few games that has you

grazing between bathing transvestites.

'Sexy' might be a little misleading. Your first mission is to defeat a massive sweetcorn powered by a fox. If that leaves you needing to retire for a hunched grumble, then you should take yourself out of society. For partially arousing moments, focus instead on Hikaru, the bunny-eared heroine who rides a rocket. And the Medusa at the end of the Castle level isn't ugly, either. Oh, just go and play *Lula 3D*.

## WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is an emulator for over 6,000 arcade games, and is perfectly legal. However, on its own it's useless, and requires ROMs to play all the old coin-ops. These ROMs are copyrighted, so it's illegal to own them unless you own the arcade machine. We're not nagging, we're just letting you know.



Phwoar. Worms.



Muscular guys called Catherine = great game.

## BACK IN THE DAY...



### 5. Frontier: Elite II

By Steve Hogarty

There's one particular moment which made *Frontier* special for me. Every time I started a new game, my seven-year-old mind couldn't make sense of the vast array of buttons and options available, especially since my Atari ST didn't have a mouse. So I'd sit there and watch the gas giant Aster sinking under the horizon, distinctly not being sociable, while continuously paying the half-cent daily berthing charge.

One day, while randomly mashing at the keyboard though, I hit the launch key and the ground dropped away. After watching the stars for so long, they were now within my reach. Just like the intro to *Star Trek: Enterprise* where man conquers space using semi-transparent cartographic overlays. I flew right into that gas giant and exploded with sheer victory and atmospheric pressure.



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# STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



*Steve Hill joins the AA in Auto Assault...*

**D**URING A RECENT vanity search of the Internet, I was intrigued to learn I've been credited with coining the phrase 'goblin-fancier'. Not a major contribution to road safety, admittedly, but if that's to be my legacy, then its genesis undoubtedly lies in these pages. Over the last few years I've ploughed through countless elf-infested dungeons and wilfully slaughtered numerous small rodents, while rarely showing anything but glaring contempt for the tired sub-Tolkien cliché of it all. Why do these things always have to be about dungeons and elixirs and parchments and pointy boots? Why can't they be about a bloke called Dave who goes down the pub and plays darts?

I'm not the only one to express these goblin-centric concerns, and finally somebody appears to have listened. Mirror, signal, manoeuvre, and make way for *Auto Assault*, a post-apocalyptic wasteland with cars and guns and tanks and bikes and great big fiery explosions. And, crucially, not a goblin within 10,000 miles. So what happens? No f\*\*\*er plays it. A social wasteland as barren as the cod-*Mad Max* scenario it painstakingly emulates, after four fruitless hours of driving around on my own, I give up and resume my infinitely more entertaining *Second Life*.

**"There's not a goblin within 10,000 miles. So what happens? It's a social wasteland – no f\*\*\*er plays it..."**

Bring back the goblins, all is forgiven.

Returning to *Auto Assault* some weeks later (because I've got to), I've been promised that a Russian clan will be waiting to greet me, having been instructed by the powers that be to show me the ropes. However, in the event the vodka-swilling communists can't be roused, and are replaced at the last minute by the so-called Orders Chaos, apparently the biggest clan in the whole of Nexus.

## DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE

Logging in, I'm greeted with the news that the *Auto Assault* servers have been merged; a damning indictment of its own failure if ever there was one. It's a bit like when two football teams merge because neither of them has enough fans. Except in the case of *Auto Assault*, the whole league has been chucked in together and they still can't fill the ground. It's noticeably busier than previously though, in so much as I actually see another vehicle, feeling immediately embarrassed at the boxiness of my lumbering NeverQuest Buggy™.

Attempting to make conversation isn't as easy it sounds, primarily because I'm driving a car at high speed while numerous irradiated mutants try to kill me. It's a war zone out there, and it's not as if you

can just pull into a lay-by and get the mobile out between mouthfuls of Ginsters.

Nevertheless, I manage a meek: "Hello. Looking for Orders Chaos." Almost instantly, DeNiro barks back: "You're not PC ZONE Steve Hill, are you?" "Yes," I reply, truthfully. "Who are you?"

"A reader," he replies, filling me with a mixture of reassurance and dread. It's nice to be recognised, but it's the online equivalent of the inescapable fact that whatever remote part of the world you travel to, you will always meet a Scotsman or a Scouser.

"Are you in a clan?" I ask the Oscar-winning star. "Nope, lone cowboy," drawls DeNiro, effortlessly harking back to his angry outsider role from *Taxi Driver*.

"I'm meant to join up with Orders Chaos," I explain, "Whoever they are."

"Beats me," spits the celebrated method actor. "I couldn't name any clan."

## CLOSING DOWN SALE

By way of explanation, Murray667 pipes up: "Most clans folded because everyone left. There's only me and one other in ours now. Laugh out loud."

Amidst the tumbleweed, MasterK announces that he would like to buy or trade a "medium turret dps 23+". In a rare moment of wit, Tyger informs him: "This is the apocalypse, not ebay."

Despondent and alone, I stick a lonely-meal-for-one in the oven and think about doing something more interesting instead. Glancing back at the screen, I notice that Anger has sent me a purple message: "Are you the reporter?"

"Correct," I tell him, laughing. Yes, I am the reporter. I'm Kate f\*\*\*ing Adie, reporting from the war zone in a hard hat and khaki shorts. In actual fact, I'm hunched joylessly in front of a monitor while keeping an eye on the Sky Sports News ticker. But to all intents and purposes, I'm the reporter, reporting on the mighty Orders Chaos clan and their plans for world domination through superior firepower.

## BILLY-NO-MATES

Clenching the virtual microphone like Steve Ryder at the Masters, I earnestly ask my first question: "How many of you are there?" "Only four," replies Anthal. "Including yourself."

So much for the seven-nation army I was promised, our numbers are decimated further when Anger has to go, presumably called down by his mum. He is however, simultaneously replaced by CheezeBaal, who leads me into a town. We stand and look at each other in awkward silence. I tuck into my Macaroni Cheese. With garlic bread. **PCZ**

And Radioactivity Rocks, presumably.





## SPECIAL EDITION

# TOTAL WAR: ERAS

Three *Total War* games and four *Total War* expansion packs in one *Total War* package? *Martin Korda* is in *Total War* heaven...

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Viking Invasion

Rome: Total War

Rome: Total War –  
Barbarian Invasion

Rome: Total War –  
Alexander

5 Total War  
collector's postcards

52-page Total War  
artbook

Medieval II: Total  
War A2 poster

Total War CD  
soundtrack

The Total War Story  
DVD documentary



**T**OTAL WAR IS like a time vacuum. You fire it up at 8pm, you shut it down at 4am, bleary-eyed, brain throbbing from a myriad of tactical manoeuvres, political machinations and epic battles. Hours slip away like quicksand as you march across deserts, forests and flatlands, conquering villages, towns, cities and nations. The world becomes reshaped by your every decision and history is rewritten with the blood of your soldiers. Now, six years, three games and four expansion packs after it first tore up the RTS rulebook, *Total War* is back in one all-encompassing, definitive package for you to own. Question is, is it worth £45? Well, that's what we're about to find out...

### IN THE BEGINNING

Let's start off with *Shogun*, the game that began the whole *Total War* phenomenon. Bound to be rubbish, right? Well, actually no. It's surprising just how well even the original game has stood the test of time. Granted, visually it's a pale reflection of the graphical splendour of *Rome*, but *Shogun*'s core gameplay still holds its own alongside its illustrious heirs and it's fascinating to see how the core mechanic has developed since those early *Total War* forays.

If you can get past the creaking visuals and atrocious attempts at siege warfare – march your army through an open door and hope for the best – then you'll still find there's plenty here to enjoy. The same goes for the excellent *Mongol Invasion* expansion, which places a heavy emphasis on cavalry warfare and provides a fascinating glimpse of what a Mongol/Samurai war could have been like had it ever occurred.

### GETTING MEDIEVAL

So onto *Medieval*, which was a huge leap forward for the franchise and massively expanded both the size of the strategic map and the battles. After playing *Medieval*, you quickly realise that *Shogun* was little more than a microcosm of this new RTS beast, in which you must conquer Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor through a combination of brute force and political guile.

Siege battles also received a makeover on a par with those fat, wrinkly women who get pumped with botox and milked through their colon on Channel Five every other day – introducing siege weapons and castle walls without a ready-made opening with a sign reading 'Enemy Armies Enter Here' above it.

In contrast, revisiting *Viking Invasion* is like taking a step back to *Shogun*'s

**A box rammed with gaming history and extras – admire it like a Da Vinci masterpiece**



*Medieval's* siege warfare was a great improvement on *Shogun*.



Never a desert when you need one.



*Rome's* siege battles towered above its predecessors.



So many men, so little time.





Alexander – the first *Total War* expansion without the word 'invasion' in it.



The *Mongol Invasion* expansion was defined by its heavy emphasis on cavalry units.



*Total War* swept aside all competition.

**Wait, there's more!**  
And when you've had enough  
of conquering the world...



Unlike the majority of special edition packages, *Total War: Eras* is much more than a collection of games. Bundled in with all of that strategic goodness is a variety of extras for you to enjoy. These include: five *Total War* postcards (pretty, though fairly pointless); a 52-page artbook which captures the essence of each *Total War* era (interesting but short-lived); a *Medieval II* poster (blatant marketing ploy); a CD soundtrack of Bafta-winner Jeff van Dyck's best tunes throughout the series (excellent, though unlikely to usurp the Arctic Monkeys from your iPod) and a DVD documentary charting the history of the series (fairly informative). Like a director's cut movie, all this extra padding is welcome, but ultimately it's secondary to the main event and unlikely to appeal to anyone but the most devoted fans of the series.

more concentrated campaign template. Failing to expand on *Medieval's* scope, it's unlikely that anyone but the most ardent *Total War* fan will want to linger too long.

## ALL ROADS LEAD TO IT

Finally, there's *Rome*. New era, new engine, revamped strategic map, *Rome* was and remains the single most impressive RTS spectacle to date. It's also the first *Total War* game to seriously cater for the mainstream (without compromising itself), thanks to a far more intuitive battle control interface.

*Rome's* new graphics engine is still the most impressive in its genre, adding a visceral brutality to the series' 3D skirmishes. Rows of realistic-looking troops cut and thrust at their opponents, while cavalry and herds of elephants bulldoze through enemy ranks.

Coupled with the night-time siege battles of *Barbarian Invasion* – in which *Rome's* already highly accomplished siege skirmishes are turned into astounding fireworks displays – *Rome* is a must-have for any self-respecting gamer.

To complete the package, there's the first *Total War* expansion pack not to carry the word 'invasion', *Alexander*, which provides one of the most taxing *Total War* challenges to date. As the great Macedonian leader Alexander The Great, you must conquer the known world in a mere 100 turns, while keeping the legendary commander alive throughout the entire campaign.

So there you have it: six years of *Total War* history neatly wrapped up in one shiny ebony box. However, if you're a fan of the series, you'll probably already own the majority of these games, in which case it's hard to see this special edition as anything more than a collector's item, a box rammed with gaming history and extras to be set on your mantelpiece and admired like a Da Vinci masterpiece.

## THE PRICE OF WAR

If, however, you've always wondered what all the fuss is about and you're considering buying *Rome* and its two expansion packs, stop! For just ten quid more you can get your hands on this superb piece of gaming memorabilia, a package saturated with quality and, if you're really up for a challenge, somewhere in the region of 200 hours of gameplay – just 22p an hour. And that, in my book, is about as much of a bargain as you're ever likely to find. **P47**

## THE RAVAGES OF TIME

TOTAL WAR	1st
AGE OF EMPIRES	2nd
COMMAND & CONQUER	2nd

Three RTS franchises have dominated the PC, but *Total War* edges it due to its scope and originality. *AOE* and *C&C* are tied in second, though both could do with some revival of their reputations.



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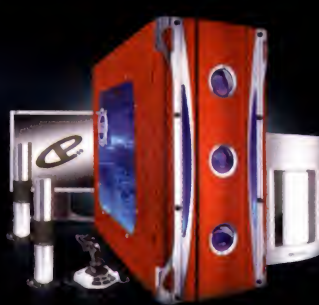
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## DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

# BATTLEFIELD 2

It's back to the oilfields for *Richie Shoemaker*, to see what the future held when *Battlefield* was still in the past...



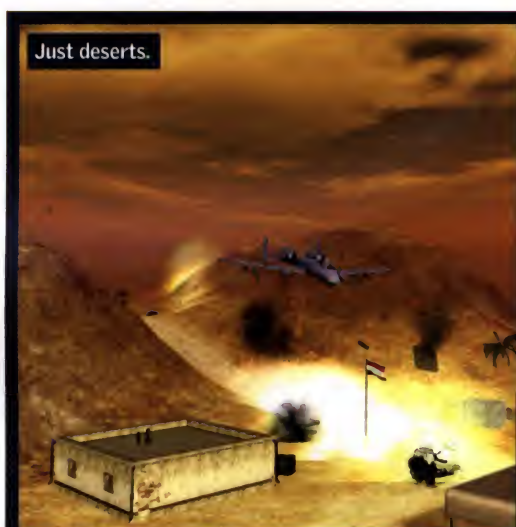
**I**T SEEMS SO obvious now that the sequel to *Battlefield 1942* would set itself in the here-and-now of contemporary military conflict. Less obvious is how well the game would again lead the way, further honing the balance of man and machine with regard to war, and introducing a concept of character persistence that in *BF2142* is about to reach a level more characteristic of your typical MMO.

In no small part, Lars Gustavsson deserves some credit. He's been around since the early days of *Codename: Eagle*, produced *Battlefield 1942* and was the lead designer during the making of *Battlefield 2*. He must have done something right because he's still in the job, now as the creative director for the *Battlefield* franchise...



She ain't pretty, but she'll blow your tits off.

**01 MODERN COMBAT:** "When we were done with *Battlefield 1942*, we looked at a number of options; whether we would remain with the WWII era, go Cold War or even try Vietnam – this was before we even started making *Battlefield Vietnam*. We could probably make games about WWII forever – people don't seem to tire of it, but as a developer you want to create something that you're interested in, which means trying to bring some novelty into it. So we always kept an eye on contemporary warfare. I guess what made us hesitate to begin with, was if we were to go there, we'd want to go all the way, with wire-guided missiles and all that – and we knew that to do all that would be a challenge. But in the end, after *Battlefield Vietnam*, we decided to go for it since it was something we all wanted to do."



Just deserts.

**02 TRAUMA:** "We'd talked to Trauma Studios while they were making the *Desert Combat* mod. As a designer, I love talking to the modding community in general. I tend to look at games from the root up – from a designer's perspective – while they look from the surface and try to dig in and see what we intended to do. Having those two different perspectives makes it very interesting to discuss the game, so lots of meaningful discussions went on and we felt that those guys could definitely contribute. "They helped us a lot with prototyping. We wrote, designed and had lots of things we wanted to try out, so while our time was spent in Stockholm creating the new engine, we had these guys implementing our ideas into the old *Battlefield 1942* code. They worked really hard, delivering a new build once or twice a week, which meant we had massive playtest sessions. It was a very good way of proving gameplay before we spent time implementing it into the new engine."





**03 REALITY BITES:** "We had thought about setting the game across many real-world places, but for every day we were designing the game – where we picked a city or area that we felt could work well – we'd research it and then a bomb would go off there. With all that going on, we realised we shouldn't really be making a game out of it. So we made *BF2* into the sandbox that *Battlefield's* always been about: you pick a location that's a decent approximation, you pick the hardware you've seen on Discovery Channel and you let people have some fun without having to step too heavily into the dreadful reality of it.

"There are still people around who experienced WWII, but in that war it was easier to distinguish between good and bad. Nowadays the whole world is a gravestone. For us, it's about having fun. We don't do 100% realistic real-world simulations – we have real-world recognition instead, with action."

Side-stepping reality was a tricky topic when *Battlefield 2* was being conceived.

Like wasps around a bottle of Lucozade.



**04 ARMY MEN:** "We went to shooting ranges, museums with old and new stuff; we also went to Duxford to look at the aeroplanes. I actually had three weeks holiday in England and went to see the Fairford Air Show with all the modern jets, which was amazing. I'd love to get to fly a modern jet fighter, by the way!

"In Sweden, we have mandatory military service, so most of the team have done some type of military service, which means we've had experience in tank and trucks and of laying in trenches. We also brought in helicopter pilots who gave us the basic knowledge of how those machines work. They even sat down with the game and helped us tweak them so that they resembled the real things as much as possible."

**"In Sweden, we have mandatory military service, so most of the team have experience in tanks and trucks and of laying in trenches"**

Lars Gustavsson, creative director, *Battlefield* franchise

Someone got out of the wrong side of bed this morning.



**05 GRUNT WORK:** "Looking at *1942*, we were pretty pleased with the vehicle experience overall. The soldier experience wasn't as solid though – collision was poor – it felt like you were stuck in glue whenever you tried to turn round. Generally, there was an overall lack of precision. So for *BF2*, we put together a large internal team whose job was to focus on improving the soldier experience. This group involved network programmers, sound designers, animators and so on, and on a daily basis they concentrated on getting a much better feel for the on-foot combat. Personally, I definitely feel that we took a huge step forward – excuse the pun. Going back and playing *1942*, the soldier experience strikes me as being quite crude."





# LOOKING BACK COMMENTARY



**06 WE'RE A TEAM:** "When you start work on a new game, you usually have lots of leftover ideas that you wanted to incorporate in the previous game but never had time – especially when you continue on a franchise. You also have the result of your experience from working on the previous game. The experience gained from making *Battlefield 1942* told us that we had a such a great time playing the game in the office, screaming to each other and barking orders, but once the game came out and people were playing online, that teamwork was lost. We wanted to try and improve that, and those improvements came in a radial menu (the Communication Rose), which was a massive improvement on the cumbersome keys we used before."

Great team work, guys.  
Have a co-operation biscuit.

Churchill's most important decision was choosing a good spawn point.



**07 TESTING, TESTING:** "We actually prototyped a number of new game modes, but we never really felt they were good enough to kick out the good-old Conquest mode. We tried hard to get CTF in there, but in the end it came down to testing. As we were promising 64-player games, we had 150 people testing it, and to have them test a new game mode on top of finding bugs – in the end, it meant we were running out of time. But in *BF1942* and *Codename: Eagle*, I really liked CTF – the addition of vehicles makes it so much more dynamic, which you don't find in other shooters. But in the end, sitting back and looking at the whole picture, we felt we had to focus on teamplay and all these other areas, rather than tossing in a couple of game modes just to be able to write it on the back of the box."

**08 PERSISTENCE OF VISION:** "To begin with, we were quite hesitant about having persistent ranking and unlockable items. The ranking system I was fine with, but we didn't want to have someone who was good at the game and would rank-up quickly, and who would then end up unlocking an item that would make him even better. In a game where you aim for a good balance, it didn't seem a good way of keeping that balance. But the way we ended up doing it, by including unlockable weapons that were better in one aspect, but worse in another, I think that worked out well."

BFHQ				
MULTIPLAYER		SINGLEPLAYER		COMMUNITY
IT INFO		STATS		LEADERBOARDS
NAME		SCORES		Overall
CATEGORY		PLAYER NAME		SCORE
Zapatero		1	SlipptStatatyVaynya	250268
		2	SoreState	260236
		3	cbarnett GSI	250006
		4	G4WES 2	208554
		5	nVidiaE3 2	157418
		6	[LIT]	150926
		7	[LIT] REVENGE	150716
		8	[LIT]SKULL Cross	150486
		9	[LIT]Phaedrus	150508
		10	LT JP Youth Kay	150476
		11	LT ES Objean	150474
		12	[LIT] Wz the pansy	150406
		13	[LIT]ZHTW	150396
		14	[LIT] Ryslaw [PL]	150363
		15	[LIT]prazymoo	150373
		16	[LIT]al-fatih	150331
		17	ForTheHorde [LT Ita]	150300
		18	[LIT]Back cat	150290
		19	LYKOREA	150001
		20	[LIT] Wz	149999

That SlipptStatatyVaynya. What a soldier. Didn't take him seriously at first.





## "You spend two-and-a-half years of your life working hard to make a good game, so to have its reputation tainted with bugs was upsetting"

Lars Gustavsson, creative director, *Battlefield* franchise

**10 STATTO:** "What probably surprised me the most was the ranking aspect and how people hooked onto the concept. When we released the game all the ranking servers were full, so we very quickly had to scramble more servers to get people playing. We're pleased with how it turned out and we've realised that *Battlefield* is as much a service as it is a game. Everyone talks about their stats, even my brother, who's a *Battlefield* fanatic. It gives another dimension to a game that used to hook people for a certain time, but now constantly rewards you for your efforts." **PC2**



In 1942, the bugs were mainly gastro-enteritis and trenchsock.

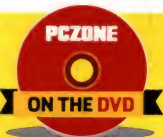
**09 BUGS:** "We were off to a really bad start when the first patch created as many bugs as it solved. Our testing processes hadn't been worked out; the way we go from bug-fixing to verifying. You spend two-and-a-half years of your life working hard to make a good game, so to then have part of the game's reputation tainted with bugs was upsetting. That puts it high on the agenda of things to change. So the whole of last year was spent getting the system working in the right direction and we're now at a stage to take *BF2142* into an open beta, just to make sure that we deliver something good. It's been a long, tough road to walk down."



"That's f\*\*\*\*ed up that town - I'm coming home."



## SUPERTEST



# BEST ART DIRECTION

The usually butch **ZONE** team explore their sensitive underbellies...

### YOUR VIEW

Last month, we talked about sound effects – which do you love most of all?

#### SYSTEM SHOCK 2

"Shodan is a demonic delight. Everything is calculated to cause maximum unease. Even the nice voices of the replicator units are sarcastically loaded. The chattering voices of the nurses causes the blood to drain from my face..."

**speaka freaka**

#### ALIEN VS PREDATOR 2

"Ahhh, the frantic beeping of the motion sensor as you fire wildly into the darkness, only to realise you're shooting at a large moth."

**ICE MAN**

#### GTA

"I may have to resist the urge to go off on a full-page eulogy to the sound of Elvis impersonators crossing the road in front of you from *Grand Theft Auto...*"

**Dogen\_D\_Derrible**

#### DOOM 3

"*Doom 3* has the best sound effects of any game ever. Go into the toilet at the start and by the corner you're thinking you can hear whispering but can't be sure. Voices also sound exactly as they should."

**Craicx**

#### STAR WARS

"I love the *X-Wing* series, but my favourite sound effect has to be something simple such as the lightsaber flourish effect."

**Andy\_Monahan**

**V**ISIT THE **ZONE** offices on any given day, and the stink of manliness will land on you like a dozen wet towels. It's common practice to snarl and beat our chests whenever we type a verb. We've taken to bench-pressing each other in the local Pizza Express, and I'll confide that I'm writing this Supertest page topless and oiled. Which member of the team I am, I'll leave to your imagination. In any event, it's so musky up here, it's like having a bath in a serial killer's sweat.

But for this Supertest, we donned on our favourite Laura Ashley-print smocks, slipped our feet into a Clairol Foot Spa and discussed the art direction of our favourite games. All while waving our hands around in a bid to dry our bloody nail varnish before the taxi arrives.

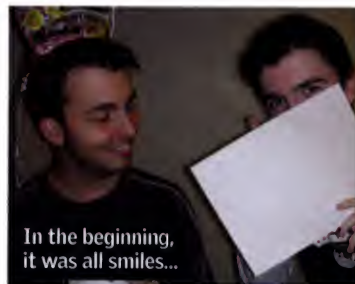
En route, Jamie became enraptured by a pair of to-die-for shoes, so Will introduced the proceedings with what can fairly be described as wordless gusto. And then, we were off. Opinions flying

around like pollen in a windsock. Everyone agreed that *World Of Warcraft* is one of the most gorgeously varied and stylised lands, except Suzy,

This led to a brief discussion about realism, and the effects of getting it slightly wrong. Who doesn't feel a dull nausea when talking to a human in *Oblivion*? They're almost right, but just wrong enough to put you off your pizza.

Once the words *Half-Life 2* had been uttered, you could sense the relief, followed by five minutes of everyone falling off their chairs and saying, "Ooh, I like the fact it looks like Estonia". Then we shut up and went back to our desks.

You can hear our fuller opinions on the DVD, and if you have an opinion yourself, be it fervently held or confused and half-formed, we want to hear it. Just visit [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk) and join in the debate on the Forum. There'll be a thread devoted to it, and lots of people will be saying: "I can't believe you didn't mention *Lula 3D*, you saw it going in and everything."



In the beginning, it was all smiles...

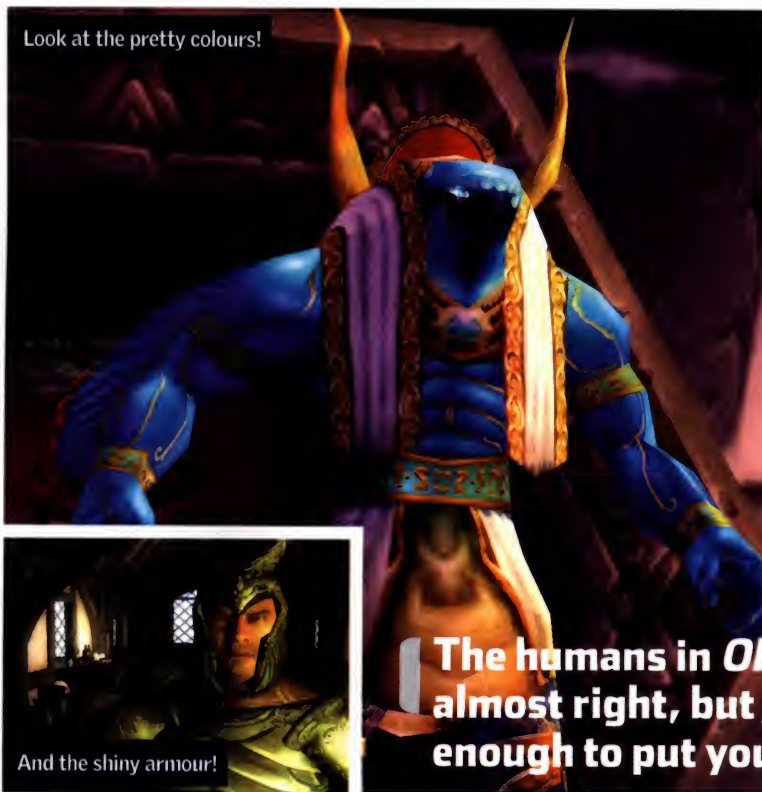


Then Suzy threatened Will. She's such a bully.



In turn, Will turned on Steve. Who chewed paper in fear.

Look at the pretty colours!



And the shiny armour!

The humans in *Oblivion* are almost right, but just wrong enough to put you off your pizza



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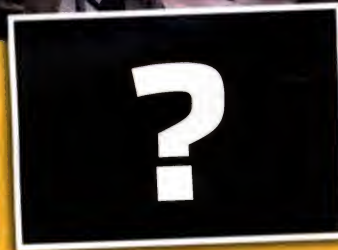
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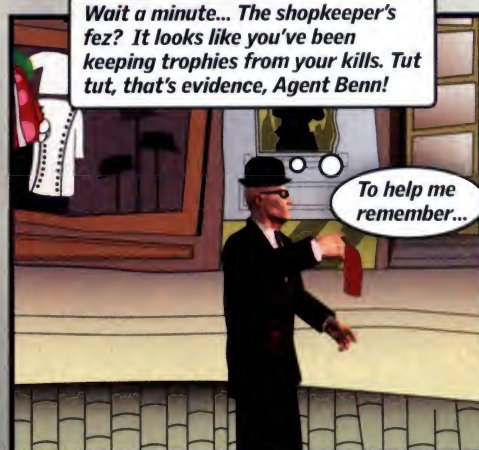
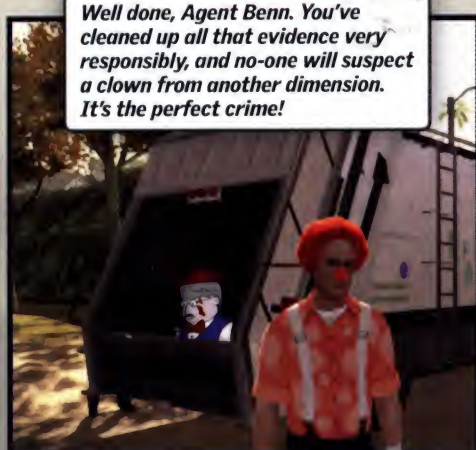
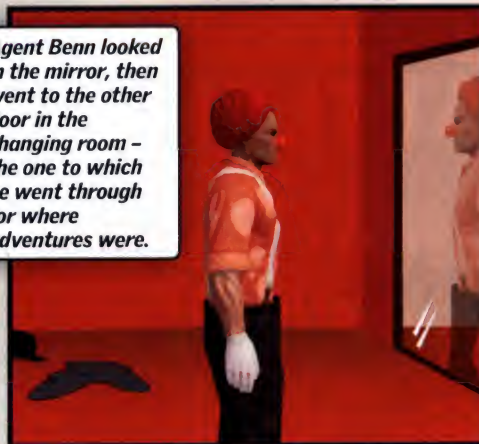
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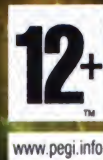


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